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WHAT SELECTED EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALS DO IN A HIGHLY DECENTRALIZED SCHOOL DISTIRCT

BY

© USHA THOMAS PROCINSKY

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1994

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SUBMITTED BY USHA THOMAS PROCINSKY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF EDUCATION IN EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION.

W. G. Maynes
Supervisor, W.G. Maynes

R.G. McIntosh
R.G. McIntosh

A. McKay
R.A. McKay

Date: September 28, 1994

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF TWO
OUTSTANDING TEACHERS

MY FATHER

MATHEWS C.P.THOMAS

1918 - 1993

and

MY SISTER

INDIRA THOMAS-WHITE

1950 - 1993

ABSTRACT

Although effective leadership by school principals has been examined extensively in the past, much of the research has been carried out in highly centralized school districts. The purpose of this study was to examine the actions of seven principals in a highly decentralized school district and to develop an understanding of their actions.

This examination was a non-experimental, interpretive study which used semi-structured, in-depth interviews to collect the data. The discussions during the interviews allowed the researcher to clarify and develop an understanding of the descriptive data provided by the respondents. Data analysis was on-going throughout the study and an examination of supplementary sources of data and follow-up contacts confirmed the trustworthiness of the data.

The complexity and diversity of the roles and responsibilities of the principals was represented by the variety of actions that the principals undertook as they engaged in leadership in the schools. Principals discussed formulating mission and goals for the school, and communicating these to the students,

staff and parents, promoting quality teaching, allocating and protecting teaching time, establishing positive expectations, providing incentives for students and teachers, professional development, involvement in decision-making and forging links with the parents and community when sharing what they did to provide leadership. They also viewed political awareness, a desire to work with people and the ability to communicate effectively as important attributes for success in the role.

Their effectiveness in the leadership role emerged as they described their actions in the school: having a sense of purpose, setting high expectations, facilitating growth for staff, students and parents, planning and organizing, reaching out to the community. The authority to make decisions for the school, and having the resources to implement the decisions were discussed as enhancers of their effectiveness as principals. Principals also discussed actions that they viewed as successful and unsuccessful as they worked to make their schools successful.

Themes that were identified from the descriptive data incorporated the notions of building a vision, involving others in sharing the vision, growth as a basis for change, and shared leadership. To conclude, the research recognized the concept of effective leadership by principals as complex and multidimensional and provided insight about the roles and responsibilities and the ways in which principals experienced them in a school district that was highly decentralized.

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

In many societies today there is an ever increasing shift towards decentralization and privatization (Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1990) in both the private and the public sectors. There is growing and sustained interest in the decentralization of education throughout the world especially in countries like Britain, the United States, Australia and New Zealand (Brown, 1990; Caldwell and Spinks, 1992).

There have been dramatic changes in education over the past decade. Caldwell and Spinks (1992) spoke of these changes as the most far reaching of this century and stated that several commentators see the changes in education in the same context as changes in the delivery of other public services. "Large central bureaucracies are collapsing in a shift to self-management. Whatever the scope of change, it is evident that the development of a capacity for self-management is now a requirement in schools in many nations around the world" (p. vii).

Caldwell and Spinks (1992) offered a model for self-management of schools. The model included the concepts of mission, vision, priorities, developmental plan, budget, school charter and culture. Although the model has been criticized by several researchers, it is one that is most widely used in self-managing schools in Australia, New Zealand and Britain. Edmonton, Alberta and Langley, British Columbia are two Canadian school districts which have implemented school self-management or school-based management and these districts also use a modified form of the model.

The literature suggests that special kinds of leaders and a special kind of leadership are required for the self-management of schools. Caldwell and Spinks (1992, p. 47) stated that two questions about leaders and leadership in a self-managing school should be addressed at the outset: Who is a leader? What does such a person do to exercise that which we call leadership? Edmonton Public Schools has been involved in self-management for over ten years and the identified leader in the school is the principal. Principals as the identified or formal leaders in the schools have written statements of roles and responsibilities identifying the areas in which they are held accountable for results. The areas include student achievement, student attitudes, staff performance, staff attitudes, parent attitudes, community attitudes, physical assets and finances (Edmonton Public Schools, 1993). Fullan (1988, p. 12) stated that we need to move away from the notion of how the principal can become master implementer of multiple policies and programs. "What is needed is to reframe the question. What does a reasonable leader do, faced with the impossible tasks?"

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine what selected effective principals in the Edmonton Public Schools do in relation to their roles and responsibilities. The major research question that this study was designed to answer was as follows:

What do selected effective principals do in a self-managed school to exercise leadership?

A number of more specific questions served as guides in the development of the study and to the analysis of the data. These questions were as follows:

1. What strategies does the principal use in the formulating of the mission and goals of the school?
2. How are the mission and goals of the school communicated to the students, the parents and the community at large?
3. What strategies does the principal use to promote quality teaching and learning?
4. What processes are used for the supervision and evaluation of teaching?
5. What processes are used for the monitoring of student learning?
6. What are the principal's priorities in establishing a climate for learning?
7. What incentives are provided for teachers and students?
8. What factors have influenced the principal in establishing school standards and expectations?
9. In what ways does the principal promote professional development in the school?
10. What are the principal's personal priorities in creating a safe and orderly learning environment?
11. What school initiatives promote and provide for

meaningful student involvement?

12. What strategies does the principal use to empower staff in the decision-making process?
13. What processes are used to develop support from outside the school?
14. What does the principal do to develop the links between the home and school?

Although these questions served to provide the initial guidelines for the study, the design was open to the addition of other questions during the initial phases of data collection.

Significance of the Study

This study had both theoretical and practical significance. Edmonton Public Schools is known world-wide as a highly decentralized school district and is viewed as one of the leaders in self-management. The results of this study should be of interest to principals, senior administrators, teachers, researchers and policy-makers.

For senior administrators and policy-makers this study provides an awareness of the interpretation and implementation of policies at the school level. This awareness may translate into revised policy to assist principals in their leadership responsibilities.

This study may also yield valuable insights for principals and teachers. By examining the practice of others, principals may reflect on their own practices to confirm or deny them and consider whether they need to be modified, supplemented or deleted. Teachers, being a very important part of the leadership team in a school, may also find that this study provides them with added information about leadership in the school. This may also provide them with a better understanding of the principal's role and responsibilities in the school and assist to develop a better understanding of the complex nature of a school.

The study's contribution to the literature pertains to the information about the roles, responsibilities and practices of principals in schools in a highly decentralized school district. The study has the potential for the identification of issues with respect to the principalship in a highly decentralized school district which may suggest that further investigation may be valuable.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study the following definitions have been used:

Effective: This term refers to achieving excellent results.

Mission: This term refers to the identified purpose of a school.

Empower: This term refers to enabling staff, students and parents in the decision-making process in the school.

Decentralized: This term refers to authority for decisions being at the school level.

Vision: This term refers to a mental picture of the preferred future.

Community-at-large: This term refers to the segment of the community that does not have children as students in the schools.

Assumptions

The major assumption was that the practices of principals in a highly decentralized school district were different from those of principals in a centralized school district.

A second assumption was that I had sufficient skill as a researcher to obtain accurate information from the participants in the study.

The third assumption was the participants had the desire and the ability to describe their practices in relation to the topic being researched.

Delimitations

This study is delimited to:

1. the exploration and analysis of what selected effective principals do to exercise leadership in one large, urban decentralized school district in Alberta.
2. the description and analysis of the data related to the principal who has a minimum of two years experience in the role.

Limitations

This study is limited by:

1. the degree to which the researcher is viewed

as impartial in conducting this study (the researcher holds a senior position in the district and will continue to be in the position following this research);

2. the willingness of the participants to share information with the researcher;
3. the ability of the participants to describe the work that they do;
4. the researcher's ability to effectively interpret and represent the data collected from the participants.

Organization of the Thesis

In Chapter One the nature of the problem and the purpose and significance of the study are introduced. Chapter Two includes a review of the literature and research findings on leadership with particular emphasis on the role of the school principal as a leader. Chapter Three outlines the research design, data collection techniques, and research procedures. In Chapter Four an analysis of the data obtained is presented. Specific strategies and practices are described, and attitudes and beliefs are recorded. Chapter Five includes an exploration of the themes derived from the analysis of the data. Chapter Six is devoted to comparing the research findings to those of other studies and the literature. Included in the chapter are a summary and the implications for practice and further research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The topics of management and leadership have inspired considerable research and resultant literature. Recently there has been an emphasis on leadership, particularly leadership in educational settings. The purpose of this chapter is to review the relevant literature on the topic of school leadership with a focus on the role of the school principal. The first section of the review presents an historical perspective on the concepts of management and leadership, including perspectives on the concepts as they apply to the field of education. In the second section, the changing demands in the field of education and the resultant changes in the conceptions of the principalship are explored. The third section reviews practices that make principals effective leaders. The chapter concludes with a presentation of a framework for examining what effective principals do to provide leadership in a highly decentralized school district.

PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Historically most researchers viewed management and leadership as discrete concepts. More recently, the concepts of leadership and management are seen to be interrelated and supportive of each other.

Bennis (1989) said, "leaders are people who do the right things; managers are people who do things right. Both roles are crucial, but they differ profoundly." He called for the leader to hold the vision for the future and to do the right things to help the organization reach that vision.

Mauriel (1989) stated that the definitions of management and leadership are not very clear and not as sharply differentiated in theory or practice. He contrasted a discussion of the meaning of the terms leadership and management to the discussion of policy and administration. He further stated that although it is important to distinguish between the functions of management and leadership, without good management of processes in an organization, leadership initiatives can lose their power.

Stephen Covey (1989) described the habits of highly effective people and examined management and leadership from this perspective. He defined management "as a bottom line focus: How can I best accomplish certain things?" and leadership as a "top line focus: What are the things that I want to accomplish?" He further stated that management is efficiency in climbing the ladder of success while leadership determines whether the ladder is positioned by the right wall.

Gardner (1989) stated that leadership is different from management though the two concepts are often confused. He argued that contrasting leadership and management may result in leaders "looking like a cross between Napoleon and the Pied Piper, and managers like unimaginative clods" (p. 3). He stated that one may be a leader without being a manager, and many managers could not "lead a squad of seven-year-olds to the ice-cream counter" (p. 2). He emphasized that the more that we expect managers to lead, the more likely they will. He also suggested that leaders can distinguish themselves from managers by thinking long-term, emphasizing vision and renewal and developing the political skills to cope and deal with multiple constituencies.

Bennis (1992) interviewed several leaders of major corporations around the world as well as government leaders to share their vision on theory and real life. Through the interviews he presented the rationale that leadership may be the critical factor separating organizations that flourish from organizations that flounder during stressful periods. Each of the individuals interviewed shared an understanding that management is getting people to do what needs to be done and that leadership is getting people to want to do what needs to be done. "Managers push. Leaders pull. Managers command. Leaders communicate" (p. xi).

Cribbin (1981) examined management and leadership using the all inclusive term of "managerial leadership". He suggested that in times of turbulence and in times of changing people the manager-leader must consider the realities regarding the work force and the changing societal environment. He presented six realities of the work force as: (1) People think. (2) People are no longer meek. (3) People are self-interested. (4) People expect to be heard. (5) People are more expensive than ever. (6) People have great potential. The societal trends that the manager-leader must understand are: (1) the knowledge explosion (2) the technological implosion (3) agglomerates and alienation (4) vague value systems (5) economic imperatives and moral mandates and (6) administrative, technical and human systems. (pp. 2-5)

Drucker (1966) in researching effective executives described the work that executives do and defined this in terms of the "knowledge worker", the person who puts to work what is in the brain rather than the strength of muscles or the skill of hands. This conceptualization has more recently become associated with leadership. He defined the knowledge worker as:

> The knowledge worker cannot be supervised closely or in detail. He can only be helped. But he must direct himself, and he must direct himself toward performance and contribution, that is toward effectiveness. (p. 4)

He further stated that every knowledge worker in an organization is an "executive" by virtue of his position and knowledge and that he is responsible for contributing to the performance and achievement of results for the organization. Sergiovanni (1990) stated that if the principal is viewed as leader of leaders and is responsible for helping teachers, parents and others to assume a greater obligation for what happens in the school, then the individual's role becomes more "executive" than "managerial." He believed that managers are concerned with directing and monitoring people and events, and executives are concerned with the broad administration of affairs, ensuring commitment to shared values and goals and helping people to achieve the goals. "Managers always work for executives" (p. 110). The understanding, further promoted by Gardner (1989) and Bennis (1992), was that there are many managers who are not executives.

Zaleznick (1989) in examining leadership in business argued that the failure of leadership was due the effects of the "managerial mystique." He expressed this phenomenon using this image:

> As it evolved in practice, the mystique required managers to dedicate themselves to process, structures, roles, and indirect forms of communication and to ignore ideas, people, emotions and direct talk. It deflected attention from the realities of business [and schools], while it reassured and rewarded those who believed in the mystique. (p. 2)

The managerial mystique promoted a strong adherence to the belief in the finding the right methods so much so that the methods became the proxy for results.

Sergiovanni (1992) in citing Zaleznick (1989) confirmed the understanding that the managerial mystique results in an emphasis on doing things right at the expense of doing the right things. He projected this mystique to the landscape of a school:

> Scores on teacher-appraisal systems become substitutes for good teaching. Accumulation of credits in courses and inservice workshops becomes a substitute for changes in practice. Discipline plans become substitutes for student control. Leadership styles become substitutes for purpose and substance. Congeniality becomes a substitute for collegiality. Cooperation becomes a substitute for commitment. Compliance becomes a substitute for results. Where the managerial mystique rules, school administrators are forced to do rather than decide, to implement rather than lead. (p. 4)

The notion that management and leadership are two distinctive expressions of administrative practice is furthered by most theorists studying the field. Sergiovanni (1991) presented support for this distinction as he believed that it was useful in terms of helping to clarify and sort the activities and behaviours of school principals. He stated further that both emphases must be considered necessary and critical aspects of a principal's style, and that the two should be in balance.

> Successful leadership and management within the principalship are directed toward the improvement of teaching and learning for students. Through assuming an active role in this improvement, the principal needs to give equal attention to

> enabling others to function more effectively on behalf of the school. One rarely finds a successful school without an effective principal. By the same token, rarely does the principal accomplish much without empowering others to act. (p. 16)

Bolman and Deal (1991) examined definitions of leadership by noted researchers in the field (Hersey, 1984; Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Kotter, 1988; and Gardner, 1989) and offered three propositions that may provide a more realistic view of leadership: (1) things make leaders happen, (2) leaders both shape and are shaped by their constituents, and (3) leadership is a relationship between leaders and their constituents where both the leader and the led are valued (pp .408-410). They stressed the need to recognize leadership is both relational and situational and that it is not leaders who are the strongest forces of change. They went on to suggest that the Hersey Managerial Grid (1984) which combines task and people into a two-by-two chart to identify four possible leadership styles is narrow in scope and relates to a small slice of the human resource frame (p. 417). They state that the Hersey-Blanchard Theory (1977) fails to distinguish between support for a person and support for specific actions (p. 419). These factors contribute to the need to "reframe leadership" to move beyond the impasses created by oversimplified models. (p. 421)

Upon examination of the various perspectives and definitions regarding management and leadership, it is apparent that the concepts of management and leadership are closely interrelated and supportive of each other. In every organization, whether in the private sector or the public sector, individuals who are leaders will also need to be managers, and those who are managers will also be required to be leaders as we prepare ourselves for the twenty first century. Lewis Jr.'s (1987) comment represented a commonality in thought: "Gone are the days in which the principal oversees the operations of the school by evaluating, monitoring and supervising the instructional program as well as the teachers". McElwain (1989) in citing Lewis Jr.(1987) suggested changes in the supervisor's orientation from that of controlling to enabling: that support replace overseeing, responsibility replace prerogatives, proaction replace reaction, change agent replace manipulator, visible management replace secluded management, philosophizing replace administrating, cooperation replace adversity, and people orientation replace authority orientation. (p. 14) Leadership for today's schools is a very complex and multi-dimensional process that requires a tremendous amount of skill and also the right attitudes.

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Most of the research findings relating to the role of the principal can be reduced to a list of traits--what good principals do and what bad principals do. But it really is more complicated than that. Some things that principals do work in all situations, while others work in only some situations and with some people, in certain schools, in certain communities. At different times a school principal must be a tough boss and a sympathetic colleague. The principal must be a financial expert who can balance budgets, acquire resources and see that the bills get paid; manage a building that houses hundreds--sometime thousands--of people at study and at work; negotiate and mediate crises; and occasionally be a police officer. But most of all, principals must make sure their students learn. The skills and traits needed for the job almost sound like a description of a superhuman. Yet there are many effective schools with principals who are highly effective given the extra-ordinary demands of the role.

Effective Schools

Researchers of the characteristics of effective schools rely heavily on test scores as important student outcome data. Austin (1979), Edmonds (1979) and Brookover and Lezotte (1979) relied on student performance on standardized tests of math and reading skills as criteria for measuring school success. Rowan,Dyer, and Bossert (1982) felt that his definition of school effectiveness was too narrow and urged researchers to give more attention to the relationship of other criteria such as citizenship, development of self-esteem, independence training, and development of self-discipline as criteria for determining school effectiveness. In a study of successful middle schools, Joan Lipsitz (1984) provided a more comprehensive definition of school effectiveness using six criteria :

1. These schools contain safe and orderly environments where student achievement is up to or exceeds expectations. More specifically, scores on standardized achievement tests are above or approach the county mean or the mean of some other comparative reference group; low absenteeism and turnover rates among staff and students exist; vandalism and victimization are not frequent occurrences or indeed are

> nonexistent; there is a lack of destructive graffiti; and low suspension rates for students exist.
>
> 2. These schools respond appropriately to the development levels of students. Basic skills and other intellectual objectives are considered important, but are best pursued in a psychological environment for students.
> 3. Teachers and students in these schools pursue competency in learning.
> 4. These schools are accepted within the context of the local community and its expectations.
> 5. These schools enjoy a reputation for excellence in the community.
> 6. These schools function well in response to or despite national issues such as desegregation, busing and other problems. (p.11)

Duttweiler (1990) defined effective schools using a more comprehensive list of criteria following a review of the literature (Purkey and Smith, 1982; Rouche and Baker, 1986; Steadman, 1987; Wayson and Associates, 1988; and Wimpleberg, Teddlie, and Stringfield, 1989).

> 1. Effective schools are student centred.
> 2. Effective schools offer academically rich programs.
> 3. Effective schools provide instruction that promotes student learning.
> 4. Effective schools have a positive school climate.
> 5. Effective schools foster collegial interaction.
> 6. Effective schools have extensive staff development.
> 7. Effective schools practice shared leadership.
> 8. Effective schools foster creative problem solving.
> 9. Effective schools involve the parents and the community. (pp. 72-74)

Researchers in the field of school effectiveness warn that the uniform application of these indicators to a school, may be detrimental to its long term health. "It is patently foolish to attempt 'effective schools' changes in schools that are wholly different from the setting in which the 'effective schools' correlates were isolated (Wimpleberg, Teddlie and Stringfield, 1989, p. 103). These indicators can help principals and other district personnel to make informed decisions about how to go about improving schools.

Approaches to Improving School Effectiveness

There is a growing need for accountability in education and in studying the effectiveness of a school one must be able to account for the many dimensions defining effectiveness. Robbins (1983) grouped the criteria and measurements used to measure organizational effectiveness to derive three approaches to improving effectiveness: (1) the goal attainment approach (2) the process approach and (3) the environmental response approach.

Goal Attainment Approach

An underlying principle as a basis to this approach is a "good school is one that achieves its goals and purposes." The research on effective schools using this approach uses student achievement measured by standardized achievement tests as the only criterion for effectiveness (Squires, Huitt, and Segars,1981). Although advocates of this approach agree that there are other dimensions that make a school effective, they argue that the regardless of all the other goals that are achieved, if a school does not have students who do well on standardized achievement tests, the school will not be judged effective by students, parents and the other constituents. The critics of this approach suggest that a multidimensional goal attainment approach would be appropriate, where equal attention is given to social, affective and psychomotor goals, purposes and objectives.

The Process Approach

In order to develop an understanding of this approach, one first has to distinguish between student outcomes and school characteristics. Student outcomes refer to the cognitive, affective and psychomotor gains that students make as a result of schooling, and school characteristics refer to such features as effective teaching, improved school-community relations, high morale, improved school discipline, better leadership, commitment of teachers, improved leadership, and improved decision-making. In this approach, it is assumed that there is a link between many of the school characteristics and student outcomes, and the schools effectiveness is judged on the basis of the evidence of the presence of school characteristics.

This approach has wide acceptance among researchers in educational administration (Sergiovanni and Starrat,1983; Silver, 1983; Likert, 1961 & Austin, 1979), and has a long standing tradition in the field of administrative theory. Advocates of this approach argue that the school characteristics are the means and processes that improve student outcomes and if the characteristics are strong in a school, student outcomes will also be strong. Critics of this approach feel that by emphasizing the processes and means, the issue of gains in student outcomes is avoided. "The process approach makes sense only when the school characteristics are in turn linked to student outcomes" (Sergiovanni,1991, p. 85).

The Environmental-Response Approach

The perceptions of the students, parents and other constituents that the school is effective, is the basis for this approach. The school that can convincingly communicate its effectiveness and viability to its stakeholders is considered effective. Meyer (1984) suggests, that when it is difficult for a school to show it is being successful by more objective means, much of what the principal does must be focused on seeking legitimacy. Critics of this approach may argue that this is unfair and unjust, but that until one deals with the perceptions, they are must be considered as reality.

Principal Leadership and Effective Schools

The research and the literature on effective schools highlights the importance of principal leadership. Lipsitz (1984, p. 11), in summarizing her case studies of four successful middle schools, concluded that:

1. Each of the four schools has or has had a principal with a driving vision who imbues decisions and practices with meaning, placing powerful emphasis on why things are done as well as how. Decisions are not made just because they are practical but for reasons of principle.
2. Through their vision and practicality they articulate their vision for their school a collective ideology that defines the organizations identity and purposes. The principals make these schools coherent, binding philosophy to goals, goals to programs, and programs to practices.
3. The principals see their major function to be instructional leadership. It is their job to sustain their faculty's commitment. They set standards for performance and establish the norms for adult-child relationships.
4. The major contribution of the principal is to make the schools larger than one person. They institutionalize their vision in program and organizational structure.
5. The principals are good enough to leave a legacy behind: their staff, a powerfully defined school, an educated community, and a tradition of excitement, sensitivity, and a striving for excellence.
6. Each schools's principal has been a driven, energetic worker, committed to establishing the best possible school environment for the age group.

Persell and Cookson, Jr. (1982) reviewed more than seventy-five research studies and reports in order to address the question of why some principals are more effective than others in running a good school. They identified nine recurrent behaviours that principals display:

1. Demonstrating a commitment to academic goals
2. Creating a climate of high expectations
3. Functioning as an instructional leader
4. Being a forceful and dynamic leader
5. Consulting effectively with others
6. Creating order and discipline
7. Marshalling resources
8. Using time well
9. Evaluating results (p. 22)

Sergiovanni (1991) cited Duttweiler's (1990) review of the more recent literature (Purkey and Smith, 1982; Rouche and Baker, 1986; Stedman,1987; Wayson and Associates, 1988; Wimpleberg, Teddlie, and Stringfield, 1899) on effective schools in concluding that the leadership role of the principal was one that is shared. He stated that the instructional leadership in the school does not depend solely on the principal; that the principal understands and uses a leadership style that is more appropriate for professionals where problems are solved through collaboration and teamwork, and the work of the teachers is facilitated through a wide range of supportive behaviours. In addition, there is community and staff involvement in setting goals and the decision-making is shared. Principals know their staff members and delegate authority for decisions, and they use their positions to recognize and reward the accomplishments of both the students and the staff

(p. 89). Sergiovanni (1991) in comparing "effective" schools with "successful" schools defined the leadership provided by the principal in terms of the following behaviours: " instructional leadership with strong views about instruction and highly visible managerial skills to ensure that all features of the model are properly provided and aligned, practice close supervision and monitoring of what teachers do and how they do it, and direct help to teachers to facilitate the model's implementation" (p. 96).

In the research and the literature there is support for the statement "effective schools are led by effective principals." Boyer (1983) observed that "In schools where achievement was high and where there was a clear sense of community, we found, invariably, that the principal made the difference" (p. 219). In a study of eighteen high-achieving and eighteen low-achieving schools in the state of Maryland, Austin (1978) found that one difference between the high and low achieving schools was the principal. The principals in the higher achieving schools exerted stronger leadership, participated in instructional matters, had higher expectations for success, and were oriented towards academic goals. In a study of what researchers have come to call 'maverick' low-income neighbourhood schools with exceptionally high achievement--Robert (1981) found that the principal took strong initiative in setting school goals, understood every dimension of the school's educational program, was highly visible in the school's hallways and classrooms, cared more about the school's academic progress than human relations, and set a tone of high expectations for the staff and students. In a further study of 'maverick' schools, Clark, Lotto and McCarthy (1980) found that there was strong support for the idea that the behaviour of the school leader is crucial to school success. In addition, there was little evidence to support the notion that the personal characteristics of leaders had anything to do with school success. What they found as critically important was the leader's attitude toward urban education and expectations for school success.

The Changing Role of the School Principal

In order to examine the changing role of the principal, it is necessary to review the changes in education over the past decade, that have resulted in re-defining leadership at the school level.

Reform in Education

The most recent educational reform on the North American continent was propelled by A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Education Reform (1983), a report prepared by the National Commission on the Excellence in Education, that promoted excellence in America's schools through increasing student graduation requirements, strengthening teachers' preparation and certification standards, and lengthening the school year. Further impetus to this initial phase of reform was provided by A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century (1986), a landmark report prepared by the Carnegie Foundation which asserted the need to restructure schools to provide a professional environment for teachers, giving them the freedom to decide how best to meet state and local goals for children while holding them accountable for their progress. The need for these changes in the educational system of the country was determined in large measure by the capacity or the incapacity of the nation to perform well in a global economy. "Excellence" and "restructuring" became the watchword of this latest movement in educational reform (O'Neil,1990).

In 1990 John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene published *Megatrends 2000*, in which they identified ten megatrends to supplement those identified in an earlier book. The initial megatrends were: (1) a booming global economy (2) a renaissance in the arts, (3) the emergence of free-market socialism, (4) global lifestyles and cultural nationalism, (5) the privatization of the welfare state, (6) the rise of the Pacific Rim, (7) the decade of women in leadership, (8) the age of biology, (9) a religious revival, and (10) the triumph of the individual. Caldwell and Spinks (1993, pp. 7-8) cited these used them to describe the most recent developments in the field of education:

> 1. There will be a powerful but sharply focused role for central authorities, especially in respect to formulating goals, setting priorities, and building frameworks for accountability.
> 2. National and global considerations will become increasingly important, especially in respect to curriculum and an education system that is responsive to national needs within a global economy.
> 3. Within centrally determined frameworks, government schools will become largely self-managing, and distinctions between government and non-governments schools will narrow.
> 4. There will be unparalled concern for the quality of education for each individual.
> 5. There will be a dispersion of the educative function, with telecommunications and

technology ensuring that much learning which currently occurs in schools or institutions at post compulsory levels will occur at home and in the workplace.

6. The basics of education will be expanded to include problem-solving, creativity and a capacity for life-long learning.
7. There will be an expanded role for the arts and spirituality, defined broadly in each instance; there will be a high 'connectedness' in curriculum.
8. Women will claim their place among the ranks of leaders in education, including those at the most senior levels.
9. The parent and community role in education will be claimed or reclaimed.
10. There will be unparalled concern for service by those who require or have the opportunity to support the work of schools.

They are also of the viewpoint that these trends in education have sufficient depth and strength in themselves, that they constitute megatrends in education.

The widespread concern for quality in education has led to reform in Canada, Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand, just to name a few countries. The relationship between education and economics has always been strong. Education has always contributed to economic well-being, and the current political movements in these countries has brought the relationship into sharper focus. However, it is important to note as stated by Guthrie (1991) that the trend toward self-management is not connected to economic well-being in all countries. In many nations where education policies have resulted in decentralization of education to school sites, they are intended more to enhance the productivity and efficiency of schooling systems than to enable education to help a nation's economy.

Restructuring of Schools

The term restructuring has several meanings but the most commonly understood meaning is "swift, radical change." This restructuring has played itself out in many schools systems under the terms of school-based management. White (1989) defined school-based management as a "program or philosophy adopted by schools or school districts to improve education by increasing the autonomy of the school staff to make school-site decisions." Brown (1990) described it as

> a manifestation of decentralization, it means simply that schools within a district are allotted money to purchase supplies, equipment, personnel, utilities, maintenance, and perhaps other services according to their own assessment of what is appropriate, Schools' authority to make decisions such as these is in contrast to standard practices in most districts, which require that such decisions be made at the central office. (p. 4)

Malen, Ogawa and Kranz (1990) defined site-based management in the following way:

> Basically, site-based management is a form of decentralization in which the individual school is the primary unit of improvement and it relies on the redistribution of decision-making authority as the primary means through which improvements might be stimulated and sustained. (p. 32)

In writing about the core concepts of reform, Slotnik (1993) stressed that in order to get beyond the remedial approach to restructuring, one must examine and define what exactly needs to be reformed and restructured. He warned that school-based management is not a reform, it is a methodology. He further stated that the bottom line is improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools and in spite of the data that show school-based management boosts school employees' sense of collegiality, ownership and morale, he questions if it really says that the schools are doing better.

Wentz (1989) described the dilemmas faced by the principal as the 1990's unfold. In addition to being an instructional leader, the principal is expected to know what an effective school looks like and manage the day to day activities. He described the principal as the emerging community hero: the person who has a personal vision of being a hero. Included in that vision is the ability to develop human potential and find ways to help people find themselves. He illustrated the changing role with the following:

> For principals to meet community needs, they must involve parents and community leaders, and they must show them how to meet their own needs within the school setting. For principals, to raise student achievement, they must create a learning environment that encourages students to raise their own standards of achievement. For principals to raise instructional levels, teachers must be encouraged to perform at optimum levels and be motivated to greater professional growth. To play a pivotal role in the district's administration, principals must exhibit commitment and a willingness to become an active part of the big picture. The emerging school leader of the 90's will be a visionary hero who understands that the role of the principal is to create, to facilitate, to motivate, to encourage, to manage by participation, to share decision- making, to encourage human potential and yes, to believe that all things are possible. (p. 43)

Mahon (1991) described the apprehension that principals feel about school-based management. He states that school-based management involves far-reaching administrative reorganization that leaves principals uncertain of their roles. He proposed that in order to provide the strong leadership, principals will need to call on all their powers of vision, creativity, risk-taking, and willingness to seize opportunities. (p. 25)

Leadership for Change - The New Breed of Principal

The schools of today and those of the future will require nothing less than an new breed of principal, a principal who embraces the principles of school-based management and teacher empowerment. Principals will have to trade their traditional roles for strange and uncertain ones. New knowledge, skills and attitudes will have to be acquired and developed, and new roles and responsibilities with a higher degree of accountability will emerge.

Functions of the Principalship

In the literature the terms 'tasks' and 'function' often appear to be used synonymously. In 1955, the American Association of School Administrators revised a list of processes first proposed by Luther Gulick in 1937, defining the tasks of the principalship to be planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, budgeting, stimulating staff, and evaluating staff. Miklos (1980) summarized the work of noted theorists in educational administration Russell Gregg (1957) and Roald Campbell (1971) to identify the functions of the principalship as decision-making, organizing, coordinating, communicating, influencing, and evaluating.

More recently, lists of tasks and functions have been replaced with lists of competencies and proficiencies in describing a principal's role in the school. In 1986, the National Association of Elementary School Principals issued the document " Elementary and Middle School Proficiencies for Principals, which listed seventy four proficiencies grouped into ten categories to define principal "expertness." Sergiovanni (1992) cited the categories and the primary proficiencies for each category in promoting a more descriptive and up to date definition of the principal's role.

Leadership Behaviour

Inspire all concerned to join in accomplishing the school's mission
Apply effective human relations skills

Communication Skill

Persuasively articulate their beliefs and effectively defend their decisions
Write clearly and concisely so that the message is understood by the intended audience

Group Processes

Involve others in setting short and long term goals

Apply validated principals of group dynamics and facilitation skills

Curriculum

Understand the community's values and goals and what it wants the curriculum to achieve
Set forth on a continuum the skills and concepts the curriculum is designed to provide

Instruction

Understand and apply the principles of growth and development
Regularly assess the teaching methods and strategies being used at the school to ensure that they are appropriate and varied

Performance

Set high expectations for students and staff and parents
Appropriately match particular learning styles with particular learning styles

Evaluation

Use a variety of techniques and strategies to assess student performance, individual teacher and staff performance
The achievement of curriculum goals
The effectiveness of the total instructional program
Assess progress toward achieving goals established for students, teachers, the principalship, and the involvement of the parents and the community at large

Organization

Comprehend and employ validated principles of effective time management
Capitalize on the findings of research in making program decisions

> Fiscal
>
> Understand the school district budget and its specific implications for the school
> Plan, prepare, justify, and defend the school budget
>
> Political
>
> Understand the dynamics of local, state and national politics
> Develop plans and strategies for helping to achieve appropriate financial support for education. (pp. 18, 20-21)

Since 1979, Edmonton Public Schools has been one of two districts in western Canada which has operated under the principles of school-based management. The district has developed a role and responsibility statement that specifically describes the responsibilities for school principals.
(See Appendix A).
Supplementary to this, the district has a statement of management purposes that identifies the areas in which principals are held accountable for results. The areas identified are: student performance, staff performance, student attitudes, staff attitudes, parent attitudes, community attitudes, physical assets, and finances.
(1994)

Tranter (1992), in examining the challenges facing principals in the 90's, stressed that principals will need to replace the attitudes of "The person with the gold makes the rules." and "Because I control, hiring, firing, and salaries, I get to make the rules" with some new assumptions:

> 1. The people most in tune with the educational needs of the community are those "closest to the action"- namely, the school employees who come in regular contact with the students and parents.
> 2. In order to chart the school's direction, the school staff must gather information from the other stakeholders in the education process--students, parents, community members, local business people, employees at other schools, and the district's central administrative staff.
> 3. The people most likely to find solutions to the school's challenges are members of the staff working in conjunction with other stakeholders.
> 4. The principal's primary role is to help staff members determine needs, identify problems, and find and implement solutions.
> 5. The principal must make sure that the school staff has the resources, information, and expertise it needs to support this new planning process. (p. 30)

He further stated that it is assumed that the principal, the school district, and the government are not the ones who know best, and that the principal is not there to impose directives from central administration. Instead, the principal is there to work with people in the school building to make the best possible decisions for the school.

Murgatroyd and Morgan (1993) encouraged educators to use the process of "Total Quality Management" as an approach to managing the well-being and the effectiveness of the school. They believed that TQM leadership required a different set of assumptions about managers and the work of managers.

1. TQM leadership is about imagination, enabling and the empowerment of the rank and file--not about status.
2. The role of the TQM leader is to activated, coach, guide, mentor, educate, assist and support his or her colleagues so that they focus on a shared vision, strategy, and set of outcomes.
3. TQM visionary leaders realize that it is cost effective to empower those nearest to a process to manage the process themselves.
4. TQM leaders concentrate on the whole picture and keep it at the forefront of people's thinking.
5. TQM leaders also search for the small things that can make a critical difference.
6. TQM leaders believe that challenge and fun go together - laughter is healing. (pp. 68-69)

Senge (1990) characterized the problem that is faced by leadership today as 'the traditional view of leadership based on assumptions of people's powerlessness, their lack of personal vision and inability to master the forces of change, deficits that can be remedied only by few great leaders" (p. 340). He believed that the new work for leaders for the future is in building "learning organizations" in which the leadership will focus on subtle and important tasks. In a learning organization, leaders are designers, stewards, and teachers. They are responsible for building organizations where people continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision, and improve shared mental models. That is, they are responsible for learning (p. 340). As designers he saw the leader's task as one of designing the learning processes by which people in the organization deal with the issues that they face, and develop their mastery in the learning disciplines. This is the new work for most experienced managers, many of whom rose to the top because of their decision-making and problem-solving skills, not their skills in mentoring, coaching, and helping others learn (p. 345). This concept of leader is recognized by Bennis and Nanus (1985) in their position that there is a need in any organization for "social architecture" through which "employees recognize and get behind something of an established entity" (p. 111). Further recognition to the concept was given by Shields (1990) in describing the "pervasive qualities of energy and design which shape an organization (p. 286). Cushman (1992) in citing Patricia Wasley of the Coalition of Essential Schools Change Study described the principal's designer role with "They come in as an architect does, with an initial vision--but then they have to be able to accommodate revisions to their notion. If they can't do that, they haven't really learned to operate in new ways" (p.3). The concept of leaders as stewards is defined by Senge as "continually seeking and overseeing the broader purpose and direction of the organization, starting with the pursuit of their own vision and moving to seeing their vision as part of something larger" (p. 352). Sergiovanni (1992) developed further the concept of steward leadership which he described as the means by which leaders can get the necessary legitimacy to lead. It provides legitimacy by establishing an overarching purpose and by strengthening the belief that the leader makes judgements on the basis of competence and values, rather than self-interest (pp. 124-125). Leadership as teaching is not about teaching other people one's own vision, it is about fostering learning for everyone (Senge, 1993, p. 356).

Fullan (1988) provided advice to school principals in the form of strategies for taking charge and building learning schools:

1. Understand the culture of the school.
2. Value your teachers: promote their professional growth.
3. Extend what you value.
4. Express what you value.
5. Promote collaboration.
6. Make menus, not mandates.
7. Use bureaucratic means to facilitate, not to constrain.
8. Connect with the wide environment. (p. 72)

It is apparent from the research and the literature that the role of the principal has become extremely complex and multifaceted. The approach to leadership has shifted from being transactional to becoming transformational. Transactional leadership as defined by Burns (1978), Caldwell and Spinks (1993), and Sergiovanni (1991) is exercised when leaders and followers exchange needs and services in order to accomplish independent objectives, and transformational leadership is exercised when leaders and followers are united in the pursuit of higher level goals that are common to both.

Sergiovanni (1991) stressed the new values for the principalship - purposing, followership, empowerment, accomplishment, collegiality, intrinsic motivation, quality control, simplicity, reflection and outrage--which underlie the demonstration of successful leadership in a school (p.136). The new roles that emerge from this set of values as defined by Senge (1990), Fullan (1993), Sergiovanni (1992), Caldwell and Spinks (1993) can generally be described as facilitator, leader of leaders, steward, communicator, expert advisor, coordinator of resources and advocate.

Much of the literature represents an ideal view of leadership and successful schools. Fullan (1993) stated that if the learning organization takes hold the principalship as we know it may disappear. As teachers understand and make a commitment to the pursuit of exemplary practice, every teacher becomes a leader and there will be momentum for continual improvement. However, it is difficult to envision a school without a principal.

The Successful Principal

The variety and complexity of the roles, proficiencies and skills of leadership discussed in the previous sections suggest that to be effective as school leaders, principals will need to possess a large repertoire of practices. The terms 'effective' and 'successful' are used interchangeably in the literature. Sergiovanni (1991) suggested that the use of the term "successful" was more appropriate as it communicated a broader definition of effectiveness, one that went beyond the dimensions of management, teaching and leadership that are commonly reflected in the effective schools research. This broader definition includes the higher-order and more qualitative, and intellectual and academic views of effectiveness.

Leadership for change requires that the principal assume a new role as a leader of learning and teaching. The principal will need new skills that can be applied in group settings and passed on to staff members, confidence in staff members and optimism for the future, and a belief that schools can meet the challenges of the future, not by having the answers themselves but by tapping into the creativity and the resources of their staff members. Principals of successful schools will have to be strong educational leaders with strong views of schooling, teaching and learning. They will have to practice 'purposing'--defined as a shared commitment--to the goals and purposes and values of the school. They will have to display a range of leadership styles--from ordinary to heroic--though style will be less important than what the principal stands for, believes in and communicates to others.

Summary

The research and the literature suggest that the role of the principal is a highly complex and dynamic one. As education responds to societal and political changes, the demands on schools and the leadership therein are bound to increase.

One point of agreement in the literature is that the principal needs to be both a leader and a manager. And a common theme relates to the focus on the principal as the prime change agent in the school. Although there are researchers who have concluded that the success of a school depends on the characteristics of a school, there is agreement on the importance of the role of the principal.

With the current push for the restructuring of education and the use of school-based management as a means to restructuring, the role of the principal has been expanded from leader-manager to include integrator, advisor, coach, collaborator, school-community facilitator, visionary, problem- solver, leader of leaders, negotiator, coordinator, resource provider and communicator extraordinaire. Two school districts in western Canada have operated with school-based management for the past decade and principals have been successful in adapting to the new expectations for their role. There is a need to examine schools in these districts and the leadership in them to determine the new forms of leadership required to support the emerging and current demands on schools.

Conceptual Framework

The application of a conceptual framework provides a valuable tool for the organization and interpretation of the data in a research study. Caldwell and Spinks' (1993, p. 59) framework (see Table 1) for describing the preferred role of the principal as a leader of learning and teaching provides an excellent framework for the organization and interpretation of the data from resulting from this study.

Within a variety of contexts--the school, classroom, community, school district, personal--principals create meanings for themselves and others through what they do. The students, staff and parents, the budget of the school, the social and political orientation of the community, personal knowledge, skill and experience, and the personal orientation may all affect what the principal does to provide leadership in a school.

Table 1

Framework for Describing the Preferred Role of the Principal as a Leader of Teaching and Learning

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MISSION AND GOALS

Formulating mission and goals of the school
Communicating mission and goals of the school

PROCESSES OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

Promoting quality teaching
Supervising and evaluating teaching
Allocating and protecting teaching time
Coordinating the curriculum
Monitoring student learning

CLIMATE FOR LEARNING

Establishing positive expectations and standards
Maintaining high visibility
Providing incentives for teachers and students
Promoting professional development

SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT
Creating a safe and orderly learning environment
Providing opportunities for meaningful student involvement
Developing staff collaboration and cohesion
Securing outside resources in support of school goals
Forging links between home and school

The action that results may be represented by various leadership strategies and practices. For example, they could take the form of shared leadershipthrough staff and student involvement and could involve the principal using one strategy or a combination of many. What the principal does leads to shared decision-making, growth for the students, staff and parents, a shared purpose, effective leadership and ultimately a successful school.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study focused on an examination of what effective principals do to provide leadership in a highly decentralized, urban school district. The research design discussed in this chapter facilitates an in-depth examination of the experiences of seven principals.

In what follows, the plan for the study, the methodology, research design, information on the selection of the participants, data collection and analysis and ethical considerations are described, as are measures to enhance trustworthiness.

Research Design

The research took the form of an interpretive field study. Miles and Huberman (1984) stated,

> Qualitative data are attractive. They are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes occurring in local contexts. With qualitative data one can preserve chronological flow, assess local causality and derive fruitful explanations. Then, too, qualitative data are more likely to lead to serendipitous findings and to new theoretical

> integrations; they help researchers to go beyond initial preconceptions and frameworks.(p. 15)

It was these "strengths" of interpretive research that I sought to bring to bear on the question being studied.

The Participants

The participants were selected through a purposive sampling technique. The seven associate superintendents of schools were asked to identify three principals that they perceived to be exemplary in the role of principal in a decentralized school district. Seven of the twenty-one principals identified were selected to participate in the study. The researcher sought a sample that would represent principals in the school district in terms of gender, size of school, level of school and number of years in the role of principal.

Of the seven principals, two were female and five were male. Their experience as principals ranged from two to thirteen years. They were principals representing two elementary schools, three junior high schools and two high schools. The student populations in the schools ranged from approximately 250 to 2000.

The initial contacts with the principals were made by an independent person from the school district who explained the nature of the study and informed them of who would be conducting the study. The principals were also informed that their participation was voluntary and that no reason needed to be given if they chose not to participate. Following this, the researcher made phone contact with each participant and provided further details of the study. Appointments for the interviews were scheduled at this time.

Data Collection

The data were collected in two ways: interviews and a review of relevant documentation. The interviews were semi-structured and were guided by the questions identified in relation to the research problem. Relevant documentation that was reviewed included district survey results, achievement test results, school budget documents, the monthly Financial Management Reporting System (FMRS) statement, school handbooks and the school professional development plan. In addition, documents provided by the participants were also examined.

Interviews were tape recorded, then transcribed.

Participants were provided with a copy of the transcription of their individual interview and asked to make corrections and points of clarification to increase the trustworthiness of the data. In addition, the researcher kept field notes with specifics about context as well as feelings, insights and personal reactions.

Data Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) stated that "some analysis must take place during data collection" (p. 146). The data were analyzed and categorized on an on-going basis throughout the process of data collection. Once the tapes had been transcribed, the researcher marked sections that applied to each of the research questions. The strategies used by each of the participants were listed and compared with one another in order to develop categories. An inductive approach to content analysis was taken. Abrahamson cited in (Berg, 1989) explains how the inductive approach involves the immersion of the researcher in the documents in order to identify descriptive categories and themes from the data. As anticipated, recurring themes were identified which in turn provided the framework around which the results of the study have been reported.

Standards of Rigor

This section describes the measures that the researcher took to ensure that the standards of rigor were met. Lincoln and Guba (1985, pp. 289-331) proposed a set of concepts with which to examine rigor in naturalistic inquiry. They propose credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as the criteria for the examination of rigor. Credibility refers to the extent to which findings and interpretations are viewed as credible by those who were the sources of the data (p. 296). Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings apply to contexts other than the one in which they were derived (p. 297). Dependability refers to the requirement that the work of one researcher can be tested for consistency by a second researcher and after examining the work of the first, can conclude that the same conclusion would probably have been reached. Confirmability refers to the extent to which the data used in the study can be confirmed from other sources.

Credibility

Multiple sources of data served to ensure that the data were credible. Interviews with the associate superintendent of schools and the information gathered through the review of documentation allowed the researcher to confirm the credibility of the information received from principals in the interviews. Member checks were utilized to provide the participants the opportunity to review the information that was shared, allowing them to confirm or modify the information.

Transferability

The researcher has provided sufficient detail in the descriptions for readers to make a decision as to whether the findings can be transferred to their own situations. The researcher cautions that due to the small group of participants and the unique condition that existed in the school district, generalization of the findings may not be appropriate.

Dependability

Data gathered during the study were maintained on diskettes readable by Macintosh computers. Copies of the diskettes are available from the researcher. The data collected were supplemented by field notes and were shared with the thesis advisor.

Confirmability

Through the member check and through the process of triangulation confirmability of the data was achieved. The participants were provided with a copy of the transcription of their individual interview and asked to confirm and make revisions to the information. All participants reviewed the transcriptions and made revisions which were then noted by the researcher. Triangulation was achieved by an examination of school handbooks, newsletters, policy statements, and role and responsibility statements with other sources relating to the data.

Ethical Considerations

In accordance with the University of Alberta Ethics review Policies and Procedures the following procedures were developed for this study:

1. The researcher discussed the purpose and nature of the study with the Superintendent and the Associate Superintendents of the Edmonton Public Schools. Approval for the study was gained for the study to be conducted.
2. The researcher holds a senior position in the Edmonton Public Schools. To ensure that the principals approached to participate in the study did not feel coerced in any way, initial contact was made by an independent person in the district. This person informed the principals of the purpose and nature of the study and who would be conducting the study. Principals were also informed that their participation was voluntary and that if they did not wish to participate no reasons needed to be given for their decision.
3. The identity of the participants had been kept confidential by not using names of individuals.
4. To the extent possible, contextual references

have been made in such a way so that identity of the individual principals has been protected.

5. Information gathered in the course of the study has been treated as confidential. All records of the interviews were maintained in a secure place accessible only to the researcher.

Summary

This chapter served as a review of the methodology that was used to conduct this study. The method selected was described as an interpretive field study within the naturalistic paradigm. Seven principals from a large urban, highly decentralized school district were the respondents for the study and the data were collected through in-depth interviews with the respondents. A description of how the data were analyzed is included in the chapter. Member checks, triangulation and field notes served to ensure that standards of rigor in the research were maintained.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

This chapter includes an analysis of the data gathered from the seven principals that participated in the study. The interview questions provide the organizational framework for the categorized information from the interview data.

The intent of this chapter is to share my understanding of the data gathered from the principals in this study, to share what they do as leaders of teaching and learning in their schools, the influences that shape their actions and the conditions that contribute to their effectiveness and success in the role.

What makes you effective in the role of principal in a highly decentralized school district?

This question served as a starting point in the study and the principals responded in very definite ways. The principals had defined effectiveness in terms of feeling successful personally and being viewed as a good leader from within the school and from outside the school. All the respondents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the level of decentralization in the school district and commented on its impact on individuals.

> Decentralization allows the emergence of people. Whether they are teachers, programme aides, custodians or principals, it gives them a chance to influence decisions and make decisions right at the school site.
>
> There is no question that school-based budgeting is the answer. That has been an absolute godsend to me.
>
> Decentralization allows me to use my strengths in a way that suits me more uniquely. If I were in a more centralized system where I was in a restrictive role, I think I would manage but I don't think I would be as creative.

Principals reflected on the things that made them effective and the range and diversity in responses indicated that there were a variety of leadership styles and approaches to leadership that helped the principals to be successful.

All the principals talked about having a vision for the school and for education, as critical to being effective. A desire to work with people and strong communication skills were also identified as critical attributes for success in the role.

One principal viewed his effectiveness in these terms:

> I look at the strengths and weaknesses of people and try to use them to build a culture. I feel a little like a sheep herder; someone who guides people to make sure that we stay on a mission. I allow for individual differences of people; I encourage them to take risks. I want to share certain values: learning is important, kids are important.

A principal of an elementary school felt that humour, along with a commitment to students and their learning, contributed to his effectiveness.

> I have a strong belief in education. Every child deserves a quality education and I will do almost anything to make sure that happens. And, I wanted to be here. The support from the staff and parents and a sense of humour have helped me to be effective.

One principal stated that in order to be effective as a principal one must want to be a leader. This individual focused on decision-making in a centralized system and what it did for her as a leader.

> For me, the beauty is that I am given the resources and I am able, to look at our specific needs and then say, "lets try this and then let's adjust to make it work." I think in a centralized system you don't have the luxury, or the time or the opportunity to make those adjustments that you can do on the spot where you are in a position to adjust all the time. It's not the money so much. It's the authority that appeals to me. I adjust teams, the organization of the school and the money to make sure that we keep going in the right direction.

The principals accepted the responsibility and the accountability that went along with the position and expressed that they could not see things working as effectively in a centralized system. Ownership for the school and the results achieved in the school were predominant in the discussions with the respondents.

MISSION AND GOALS

What strategies do you use in formulating the mission and goals of the school?

How are the mission and goals of the school communicated to staff, students, parents and the community at large?

Each of the six principals had constructed a personal definition for the term 'vision' which appeared to vary considerably and was reflected in the sharing of their vision for their schools.

> The vision for my school is that we end up with an atmosphere where kids are able to learn and demonstrate that they are able to learn at a rate that suits them and that they are able to experience success.
>
> The vision I had for the school had to start off being basic. Number one goal was the academics for the children. We are a darn good school, it's clean, we challenge our children and it's safe.

> I believe strongly in academic success and I believe that's what parents in the end really want for their children, academic success.

> Well, I think that first and foremost you have to have some kind of vision. Sometimes I hate the word vision because we use it in the wrong context but I believe that I have learned how to become someone who wants to make the world a better place. Along with that goes a vision about what education could be versus what it is and I think that's the starting point of effectiveness - to have some idea of where a principal wants to go from where they are.

Two principals stressed that the vision that they had for their schools had been shaped by the staff and parents of the school. Both principals were in new schools and both were the first principals for each of their schools.

> Being a new school of course we were involving parents way out at the front end of things. I think part of our success has been to involve parents in some of the meaningful things. I believe that the important things like what should the dress code and conduct be in the school, How should we be reporting progress? What is meaningful to expect in terms of personal programming? are issues that we have taken to the parents.

> Vision spreads in every direction. Our little catch phrase that we have in our school is "preparing the students of today for the challenges of tomorrow." I think initially it was my vision but as we began to add staff and as we began to add people into the equation it became I believe very much a shared vision.

The principals used a variety of strategies to communicate the vision to the different stakeholder groups in the school. All of the principals communicated the vision through newsletters and school handbooks. In addition to these strategies, the vision was communicated to students on a regular basis in school-wide assemblies and through their teachers in the home room.

In the junior high and senior high schools, principals reported that they felt that communicating with large groups of students such as the whole student body was difficult and thus they found grade-group meetings or one-on-one contact with the students was a better way to communicate the vision to students. All principals stressed the need to take the vision beyond words and put it into action. "Modelling" was a term that was used by the principals and one principal described modelling this way:

> The first thing that I wanted to do was to create a positive environment so what I did was always be upbeat and positive, always.

Two others stated it in these terms:

> It's more than just stating the vision, it's in the actions, it's how we deal with kids on a day to day basis.

> We also share vision by what we do every day. What we comment on, what we as leaders chose to recognize, what we as leaders ignore, those are all the yes and no aspects of the vision.

Communicating the vision with staff was carried out on a daily basis. All principals worked diligently at sharing the vision with staff and getting them to buy in. Staff meetings and schools professional development days were the most common means for developing and communicating the vision to the staff. One principal used "journalling" as a strategy to develop and communicate the vision for the school.

> We have a journalling process whereby teachers write to me once a week on a given topic or whatever they would like to write about. It is an expectation that I have that all teachers will journal. Some teachers don't do it for a week or so and then I'll just check back and I will say, "Oh, I haven't heard from you recently, write me a little bit." I respond as in a language arts journal and it gives me a chance to find out what people are thinking. It is a very effective tool for helping people understand their own vision and helping them develop a sense of joint vision.

The "leadership team' was mentioned in the discussions relating to communicating the vision, and in many of the schools the leadership team was comprised of staff members who had a formalized leadership position such as assistant principal, department head or curriculum coordinator. In one school the leadership team and the role they played in developing the vision for the school was defined a bit differently.

> I think the vision is shared first and foremost through the leadership team. One of the things that has made our organization effective is to develop a leadership team. A team of people in our school that are leaders. I meet with these leaders once a week and share my vision. Always an aspect of our meeting is sharing my vision and discussing theirs.

Communication of the vision for the school was done mostly through school newsletters and handbooks, and through the teachers during their contacts with parents. All of the schools' handbooks had a statement of vision or mission included in them. Some principals expressed that they had a key role to play in communicating the vision to both parents and the wider community.

> We have a number of key parents in our school and I work closely with those key parents. We have a representative from our parent group in each of our elementary school parent councils and in the high school councils that our kids feed into. They carry our vision and mission and what we are all about at [name of school] to those other areas as well, which I think is really important.

> Well, we do it through newsletters. But I don't know how effective newsletters are. But the best way to do it is a one on one situation. The other thing is that you have to get out in the community and talk whenever you can. You can hit different audiences in different places. So I have been

> asked to speak in a couple of churches which is a different audience than those at another kind of meeting, but those are all our audiences. I think this is important.

All the principals saw themselves as creators of the 'vision' for their school. As they worked with the staff, students and parents the vision developed into one that was shared.

PROCESSES OF LEARNING AND TEACHING

What strategies do you use to promote quality teaching?

The principals were comfortable in discussing teaching and the ways in which they worked with their staffs to ensure a high quality of teaching, and it was obvious that all of them saw learning as the 'raison d'etre' for their schools. One principal stated it very succinctly when she said, "Well, this is the heart of where I think leadership needs to go. I believe that what happens in the classroom is the most important part of my job." She went on to express what she considered was critical to the promotion of quality teaching:

> First and foremost, I teach. I know there is a lot

> of controversy about whether principals should teach or shouldn't teach but I really believe that by also teaching, I am also learning what is going on. I can get a better feel for what some of the teaching difficulties might be in the classroom.

In her school, a statement relating to quality teaching had been developed and staff were aware of and understood the requirements. In addition to the written statement, teachers received regular feedback on their teaching performance.

> We have written up on paper, in words, what makes a good teacher and what are some of the indicators, some of the things we see in the classroom if good teaching is going on. So everyone knows those things and strives to do those things.
>
> I believe that the teachers need regular feedback and I am not just talking about performance appraisals. I am talking about regular feedback on strategies and things that are happening in the classroom. We make sure that our teachers have a lot of feedback on what is being seen in their classes from our administrative and leadership team and from other teachers because we do run a mentorship program where we pair teachers up with each other. They go in and observe each other's classrooms and talk about strategies they are using. I also think it is really important to keep looking at what are the strategies we are using now and what could be we be doing to be more effective.

In the two high schools, the principals shared that the responsibility for the promotion of quality teaching was delegated to the department heads. One principal stated that they had a role and responsibility statement for the department heads that was similar to the role and responsibility statement for the principal. He felt that it helped the department heads to operate "the way you should in this district considering the district culture." He further highlighted the role of the department head: "We feel that we have the department heads operating like principals. For example, in science there are eighteen teachers and [name of department head] is a principal of the department."

The curriculum for the schools is mandated by the provincial government's department of education, and ensuring that the teachers knew the curriculum was important for all of the principals in promoting quality teaching. One principal shared her surprise that sometimes teachers are not teaching the curriculum.

> One of the things that we try to do is to make sure that everybody is knowledgeable and comfortable teaching the curriculum. I am often surprised that sometimes teachers aren't, so we try and make that a focus. We have our departments share what is working as far as the curriculum in that department. Also, what is not working. That allows us to bring in consultants or to work with other department heads where perhaps they will put some strategies in place.

Two of the principals referred to "demonstrations by the students of their learning" to be an effective strategy in promoting quality teaching in their schools. Through this they felt they could monitor the teaching and the learning that was taking place.

One principal placed a very high priority on being in each teacher's classroom frequently and he provided feedback to teachers about what was observed, and then further communicated his expectations for their performance.

> I am in the classrooms every day--mornings and afternoons--pretty well in every class. I can very quickly pick up what is going on in the classroom and I can comment on that. I comment on how wonderful the class was, on the things that are up and the student work that is there. It's just a matter of having expectations. I expect all the kids to do well and the same goes for the staff.

One principal reported that in addition to being in the classrooms on a regular basis, he focused on professional development of his staff in order to improve the quality of teaching.

What processes do you employ for the supervision and evaluation of teaching ?

The processes used by the principals to supervise and evaluate teaching were varied. In the larger schools, the responsibility for the supervision and evaluation of teaching had been delegated to other members of the leadership team and the principal had no direct involvement in the process. This was particularly true of the high schools where the department heads had been delegated this responsibility. One principal shared that although she does not do the annual performance reviews that are required in the district, she reviews staff performance with the members of the administration team, on a weekly basis.

> Every week in our administration meeting, we run down the entire staff list and amongst us we say, is there anyone we need to see this week? They give information mainly from the department heads and then I make an effort to see those people. So you see the people that need to be celebrated, congratulated but more important you start to see people who might be experiencing difficulty.

Four principals referred to "being in the classrooms" as a strategy to supervise the teaching. For example, one principal stated that throughout the year she makes informal classroom observations and makes anecdotal notes about teaching and learning and then at the end of the year she does a final performance appraisal based on the role and responsibility statements and the indicators of success. Another principal stated,"One of the ways in which I keep in touch with what the teachers are doing is by walking around. Sounds silly, but you can do a lot of walking around in two hours a day. In the daily contact you start to pick up the pulse of where the teachers are at."

The school district has a requirement that every teacher will have an annual, written performance evaluation. The process and the format of the performance evaluation is not mandated and each school has developed its own process. For example, two principals referred to a process that had teachers identifying the results that they would achieve over the year and the performance appraisal was based on the extent to which the results were achieved. One principal expressed some concern over the evaluation process being too comprehensive.

> Sometimes, I think we have too comprehensive an evaluation process. I think it is important to set the results for which the individual is responsible. So, we have a role and responsibility statement for each teacher and that's set out very definitely at the beginning of the year. Then I give each teacher a copy of the indicators that would indicate good performance and again they are fairly comprehensive. At the end of the year, I do a final performance appraisal based on the role and responsibility statements and the indicators of success. It is a written document and it is a

> summative statement.

One other principal stated:

> We have a set format in which they set goals and indicators and the plan to achieve the goals. They discuss it with me. It is really quite simple and straight forward. Then I write up the evaluation based on the goals that they set for themselves. The rest of the evaluation is a condensation of what they have done over the year and I identify things they need to work on for the following year.

One principal stated that he had strong personal beliefs about teaching and learning and that his evaluations reflected what he was looking for in the classroom.

> My evaluations talk about how wonderful the classroom looks, how happy the children are in their classes, how hard they are working and the positive comments that I get from parents and students about the work that they are doing.

What processes do you use to monitor student learning?

Principals referred to a variety of ways in which they monitored student learning. Not only did they use frequent classroom visits to monitor teaching, they also used the strategy to monitor learning. As one principal stated:

> I go into every classroom. I look at every kid's work. I talk to students. I discuss what they are doing and I sit down with them and work with them in the classroom setting.

He went on to say that he checked every report card and put comments or stickers on each one. In addition to this he phoned the home to let parents know that their child was doing well in school. Checking the progress report or report card was a strategy used by most of the principals to monitor student learning.

Three principals referred to demonstrations of student learning as an effective strategy to monitor student learning. This strategy requires the student to demonstrate learning in relation to an aspect of the curriculum and is usually done through the student sharing and describing learning in reference to a piece of work, with the parents, the teacher and the principal.

One principal shared that her school used the traditional ways to monitor learning through district-wide assessments or provincial assessment. However, she stressed that one of the best strategies to monitor student learning was to rely on the teachers and their professionalism.

> The best information is from teachers. I think you need to look at what staff are telling you about the learning that is taking place.

The development of an individual education plan

(IEP) was a strategy that the principals mentioned was also used in the schools to monitor learning. This strategy, however, was used mostly with students who were identified as having special needs.

CLIMATE FOR LEARNING

What are your priorities in establishing a climate for learning?

All of the principals expressed the view that they worked to make the school a place where all could achieve success--the staff, the students and the parents. They talked about creating a climate where the staff would feel confident about their professionalism and, as one principal describes it, I tell the staff that "they are independent, they make their own decisions, they initiate things, they carry through on things, they take responsibility, and they pride themselves on their professionalism." Another principal described her efforts to develop a climate of professionalism in this way. "When I talk to people, they have to be comfortable talking about the learning process, not just the teaching process. What often happens in the school I have found is that the staff want to talk about student behaviour rather than student performance. For me the important thing is that we get everyone talking about what it is we are trying to learn and how we are going to know we have learned."

In talking about establishing a climate for learning, the principals talked about learning for both the students and the staff in an environment that allowed risk-taking. One principal talked about risk-taking with the staff and described it this way:

> The other thing is you have to encourage risk-taking. We have some of our staff trying the continuous progress model like they have going in Calgary. Others are doing some cooperative teaching and some other are doing some team teaching. I think that the beauty is that you are letting people try a whole variety of things but you are not mandating one in particular and I think that it works.

Another principal used the term 'discipline' to describe her priority for establishing a climate for learning in the school and expressed the view that risk-taking was critical for learning, especially for the students.

> I like to use the term classroom climate but there is no question that there has to be an environment in the school where the students feel safe, where they can risk because learning involves risk, and where students and staff feel that there are positive attitudes, because positive attitudes are really positive for learning.

Many of the principals talked about activities that allowed risk-taking on the part of students. One principal described a choral performance by a group of adolescent students in the school assembly and then stated, " I don't know if the rest of the kids would have really understood but it was a tremendous risk for some of those kids to be up there. To me, self-confidence comes from that. It comes from achievement, from taking a risk."

What incentives do you provide for staff? for students?

Providing incentives for staff and students was used primarily as a strategy to recognize the efforts of individuals. The incentives took many forms and varied from principal to principal. All of the principals talked about the recognition of staff and students through items in the newsletters and individual notes and cards sent to the individual or, in the case of the student, to the individual's parents.

Incentives for staff

Traditionally, staff were given some additional time off without instructional duties as an incentive for involvement in extra-curricular activities but due to fewer financial resources at the school, other forms of incentive are being used. One incentive used frequently by principals, was to bring in supply teachers, so that the teachers could take part in a professional activity of their choosing. Some staff members attended workshops or inservice sessions and some staff members went on inter-visitations to other schools.

> One principal talked about the difficulty of singling out staff members for recognition.
>
> That one is a real dilemma for me personally because I know that we have some really special teachers. At the same time I know that we have some very average teachers and we have some teachers who are experiencing difficulty. We are trying to build a team approach in the school and I made the decision, rightly or wrongly, not to single out any one person because so many people were trying so hard to do a good job and everybody was doing their best.

However, this principal felt that given another year or so, there would be a strong enough base that would allow him to begin recognizing individual staff members with incentives.

Another principal expressed support for the concept of 'merit pay' and stated that he could not use it due to constraints of the teachers' collective agreement, and lack of support for the concept by the local teachers' association.

Incentives for students

Principals used a variety of incentives with students, both for achievement and behaviour. The strategies used at the elementary level were quite different from those used at the secondary level. At both levels, the recognition of students and their accomplishments through newsletters and at assemblies was a frequently used strategy. One principal at the elementary level used pizza lunches as a reward for students who had taken on a leadership role in the school. Another principal used positive phone calls to the home as an incentive for students, and he felt strongly that the phone calls assisted tremendously in moving the school forward.

> I spend a lot of time phoning the homes. These are positive reports that the teachers give me. I am trying to reinforce with the teachers that reinforcing the positive will get us a thousand miles further than the negative. So I phone the home and say,"Give your child a hug" and the child comes back to school the next day in a very positive frame of mind.

In their efforts to focus on achievement, many principals gave special attention to the report card and felt that their comments, in addition to the teachers' comments, provided an incentive for students to focus on achievement. One principal wrote a three to four sentence comment on every student's report card. He felt that it communicated that he cared about the student and the student's work.

At one high school, as an incentive for outstanding achievement and attendance, the principal allowed students who had excelled to choose their teachers for the next term. Another high school principal stated that she did everything possible to recognize students.

> We recognize them in every way possible. We put their names on the bulletin board, we put them in the daily bulletin, we write them letters, we have lunches, we post their names and accomplishments in the malls, and we phone parents. It all works and they love it.

All of the principals felt that although there were many incentives for staff and students, they hoped that intrinsic rewards were seen as being just as valuable as the extrinsic ones.

What factors have influenced you in setting school standards and expectations?

All of the principals expressed that there was a need to set standards for the school and many of them used the management purposes identified for the district as the framework for setting standards. The management purposes for the district identified student achievement, student attitude, staff performance, staff attitude, parent attitude, community attitude, physical assets and finances as the areas in which schools would have to meet standards. Many principals made reference to results--of achievement tests, of attitude surveys, of parent surveys--as factors that had a great influence on the setting of standards. Another factor that influenced the setting of school standards was the individual principal's understanding of the expectations of the parents and also of society for the school. Two principals mentioned having high personal standards as a factor that influenced the setting of standards in the school. Having a good reflective background and the strength of the staff were two factors that influenced one of the principals in setting standards for his school.

In relation to student achievement, all of the principals mentioned "success for every student" as the standard in their school. The principals along with their staffs had developed a plan for the school for the year, in which they identified the results that would be achieved in the area of student achievement over the year. At the high school level, principals talked about these in terms of the percentage of students passing the diploma examinations, and the percentage of students who successfully completed their courses. At the elementary level and junior high levels, principals stated these in terms of the percentage of students achieving the benchmark on the district's achievement tests and also the provincial achievement tests, and included process results such as "one hundred percent of the students will be involved in a home reading program."

Student discipline was an area in which all the principals had set standards. The standards were influenced by the district policy on student conduct and behaviour, and reflected a no-nonsense approach to discipline and behaviour in the school. For example, in the high schools, the principals mentioned "zero tolerance for weapons" as one of the standards for student conduct. Another principal mentioned the satisfaction on the part of staff and parents with one of the standards that had been established in her school.

> We have some standards. One of the most satisfactory standards that we have set in the

> school this year is that every parent call will be responded to within twenty-four hours. Everybody likes that. Parents like it, staff like it.

She went on to say that we in education are privileged to work in an institution where people can learn. It was her belief that we if we didn't set some standards we would lose our focus and eventually our customers, the parents and the students.

Many of the principals talked about expectations for students and staff. Expectations for staff were mainly in the areas of communicating with parents and involvement in the decision-making processes in the school, and expectations for students were focused on attendance and behaviour.

SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

What are the principal's priorities in creating a safe and orderly learning environment?

The creation of a safe and orderly learning environment was a primary concern for the principals, especially at the secondary level.

One respondent shared the strategy of involving students in determining what constituted a safe environment.

> One of the strategies I used was I asked the kids what would make the school safe. I think too often

> we don't ask the young people. They told me that if they can walk through the halls and feel totally comfortable without people swearing at them, calling them names, feel that their lockers are safe, feel that they can go outside for a smoke and feel comfortable, that is safe. It is also safe if they can gain access to adults in a minute.

She furthered expressed that she was surprised with what the students had shared with her as she had not realized the extent to which the young people relied on the staff to ensure the school was safe.

Another respondent who worked in a school where there had been several incidents that threatened the safety of students, expressed some concern that it was becoming increasingly difficult to deal with the violence in schools as there were many factors that were external to the school that the principal had very little control over. However, he did say that the best way to deal with it was to take action to pre-empt it.

> I think we now have a staff who are much more alert to the danger signs such as strangers in the building and strangers in the parking lot. Staff are letting us know if they suspect anything. Staff and I are more visible in the school, during the noon hours, during class breaks and after school, so that we can look at someone and determine if the person is a student or not.

Increased visibility was a strategy that all of the respondents referred to in maintaining a safe and orderly learning environment. They felt that students were less prone to act in a way that would threaten the safety of others when there was an adult present.

Respondents from the elementary and junior high schools talked about making the school safe by communicating the expectations for behaviour clearly at the beginning of the year and on an on-going basis throughout the school year. One respondent from a junior high school stated that they have few rules relating to behaviour but the students know them and understand them.

> We have one rule. Behave yourself according to where you find yourself appropriately. And we have a list of guiding principles for the behaviour of everyone in the school: Respect your elders. Help others less fortunate than yourself. Respect different ethnic and cultural groups. Respect teachers and other staff in the school. Respect and love your parents, care for their health and help them any way you can. Be polite and use appropriate language. Respect the right of others, do not disturb others who are working or learning. Be courteous, friendly and polite to visitors.
>
> Be honest, correct your mistakes, keep your promises. Return what you borrow. Keep a regular routine, attend school regularly and on time. Get to class on time, listen attentively and ask questions if you don't understand. Review after each lesson. Finish all your assignments and do them as neatly as possible. Actively participate in school activities and clubs. Represent your school well, even when you are not in school, remember that you are a [name of the school] student, whatever you do will reflect on all of

> us. You are expected to work hard and do the best that you can at all times. Be true, be yourself, be true to yourself.

The statement of principles is posted in classrooms and hallways and serves as a constant reminder to everyone in the school. In addition, the principal has an expectation that every student will do one hour of social service per week. A respondent from an elementary school referred to 'respect' as a term that was used frequently in his school. "It is used constantly, out on the playground, taking care of children, getting students involved, and by the staff when dealing with children. It all goes together to get the same end result."

Another respondent took a very different approach to working towards the establishment of a safe environment for learning. He has taken an inter-agency approach to the issue because he recognized that many of the problems that students face in school are due to pressures exerted from outside the school.

> Once every week, we have the counsellors from our school meet with the police resource officers, social services workers, the health workers, the probation officer and with any other agency people with whom our students may have contact. This way we can cut through the problems and get solutions faster. The academics will come if there's a safe

> learning environment, where people are working together.

In another school, the principal involved the students in developing a positive behaviour plan which included a Charter of Rights and Responsibilities. The charter set out the rights and responsibilities of the students and the consequences for the violation of those rights. The students then developed a code of conduct and expectations for their individual classrooms and it was the principal's view that this had been very effective in establishing a safe environment for learning in the school.

What initiatives promote and provide for leadership and meaningful student involvement?

All the principals talked extensively about student involvement in the school and each of them had used a variety of strategies to involve students. The principals in secondary schools talked about the students' union as a structure that was in place to develop leadership and involve students in the school, while the principals in elementary schools talked about family groupings and cross-graded groupings as strategies to develop student involvement in the school.

One principal of a high school described the challenges that she faced in securing the involvement of students in the school.

> With a big plant like this, one has to make sure there is enough variety and enough meaningful activity for them to be involved with, aside from the usual student government.

A strategy that has been particularly effective in her school has been the "student advisor program", which gave students an avenue for involvement.

> The most effective one for us is the student advisor program. Every month there is some way in which students can respond to specific issues and the information comes back to me. For example, last month I said, "What would make life better around here for smokers, who smoke outside?" The response from the students was benches and ashtrays and as you can see they are in. It took two weeks and the kids really responded positively.

Students in her school have had the opportunity to be involved in decisions relating to the expenditure of funds for learning resources, solutions to the absentee problem, and making the school a safe environment for students.

Principals of high schools talked about the Crime Stoppers program as a strategy for involving students in creating a safe environment in the school. Each school has a Crime Stoppers Board that receives and acts upon information on criminal-type activities that have taken place in the school. The involvement of students in the Crime Stoppers program has allowed one principal to take preventative action in relation to maintaining a safe school environment. In his view the lack of involvement of students in the past had led to some incidents in the school that could have been avoided.

One principal shared that she had an all inclusive philosophy about leadership and involvement.

> Any student who shows a desire, willingness and a dedication to being there, can be there. We do not have a formal elected student council and for that reason the group is very large. The natural leaders tend to emerge and as they do they are given more responsibility within that group.

She stressed the need to involve students in meaningful ways where they could see the results of their actions, and the need for some training.

> When we were first formulating the plans for the school, the students wrote up the behaviour policy. They wrote it up as they saw it, what it should be, what should be allowed, what shouldn't be allowed, and what kinds of consequences should be in place. They also looked at progress reporting. What do you want your parents to know about what you know and can do? So we get them to be involved in some meaningful decisions where they can see the results of their actions. We do formal training with them, some leadership training where they are involved in finding out how to make decisions, deal with conflict and so

> on. We usually do this in the spring in preparation for the next school year.

Another principal viewed student leadership in terms of "every student a leader" and the strategies that he used to develop leadership in his student body had this as a basic principle. The school has leadership classes and all the students take part.

> We don't have a formal students' union in the school. The reason we moved away from it was because it really limited the number of students who could become involved and take a leadership role. There were always students who seemed to have the skills, characteristics and abilities, who could never take part. So by tying it in to our leadership classes, we all of a sudden had twenty-five or thirty students at each grade level who became actively involved in the decision-making processes in the school.

In his school, students are encouraged to present their ideas for activities in the school through a formal presentation to the staff at the monthly staff meeting.

> When a group in our school has an idea, they know that there is a process to be able to do it. They develop a one page description of their idea and present it to me. After a review by me, they make a presentation to the staff at the monthly staff meeting to gain staff support for the idea. If they get staff support for the idea, they proceed. It's been a really important process in the school for kids.

Principals in the secondary schools also made reference to peer coaching, peer conflict-resolution teams, and managing the school store as opportunities for developing leadership and securing the involvement of students.

Principals of the elementary schools sought the active involvement of their students through some different strategies as compared to those used in the secondary schools. One principal referred to a problematic situation with the lunch program and how "family groupings" was an effective strategy for the dealing with the situation and developing leadership amongst his students.

> Ninety-eight percent of our students eat lunch here. It was chaotic. I sat down and divided them into family groupings finally. With the family groupings, the children are empowered to take a leadership role and to carry their leadership from one level to another. We let them know that we are proud of them, proud that they are in the school and proud that they can demonstrate leadership skills. The other children see this and they feel that they can do the same thing. Without a doubt that is one thing that has made the lunch hours bearable and enjoyable.

He further sought input from his students on issues such as making the playground more interesting, and making the school a better place for all. He stated,"Taking feedback from the children and acting on it is really important. That's one small way in which we have the children become part of the decision-making in the school."

The teacher advisor concept was also used in the elementary schools and one elementary school principal discussed the teacher-advisor concept as it operated in his school.

> We have what we call guidance and support groups. We have one hundred minutes a week as part of the health program, during which time we try to get the kids to work at intrinsically applying leadership skills. We have used the program QUEST-Skills for Growing as the basis for the development of leadership skills with our students.

Some of the principals expressed concern that in spite of their efforts to have students actively involved in the decision-making at the school, the results of attitude surveys indicate that the level of student satisfaction with their involvement in decision-making in the schools is not very high.

How does the principal empower staff in the decision-making process?

Principals realized that in order to have a successful school they needed to have everyone working towards the same goals and purposes. One way of achieving this was to have the staff involved in the decision-making processes in the school. Principals used a variety of strategies for involving staff in the school and stated that the level of involvement was both situational and relational. As one principal stated,"What I am finding is that people trust my decision because they understand so clearly where I am coming from, and they are philosophically along with me so they are willing to let me make the decision in their stead." This principal had achieved this trust after putting a lot of effort into helping the staff reach consensus on the goals and purposes of the school. She used journalling and "team time" as strategies and described her efforts to involve staff this way:

> I believe that the most important strategies that we use right now are journalling and team time. What often tends to happen in a school is that there is a major staff meeting and a few vocal people speak up and that is considered as input or non-input. What happens now is that all teachers have the opportunity for input either through journalling or through team time or both. The lead teachers from team time meet with me every week so I get a lot of information and input from staff. I feel it works better because the staff feel a lot better in a smaller peer-group to say what is on their mind.

In addition to these strategies, she gave her staff many other opportunities to be involved in decision-making, depending on the situation. She summed it up by saying, "Perhaps I err in that I give them too much opportunity, because a lot of them don't take me up on it. They just say go ahead, make a decision on that one." In a survey of staff attitudes, the staff had expressed a high level of satisfaction with their involvement in the decision-making in her school. The principal expressed that this was scary because along with that came great responsibility and high expectations for future performance.

One principal talked about empowering his staff in the decision-making process by "letting them run with it if they decide they are going to take something, take responsibility for something." In his school, he debriefed with staff after every major school activity to determine if things went according to plan and to determine if there were things that could be improved. He believed that because they all shared the same goals and purposes for the school, he was able to delegate things to the staff.

> We work as a team and we work to achieve common goals. We are well prepared. We demonstrate a willingness to learn. We initiate and take ownership of what we do. We are not afraid to make mistakes, we have a sense of humour. We attempt to get to know our students well and take the role of advocate. We work closely with the parents to ensure the success of our students. We keep our students and parents informed about the progress that our students are making, both academically

> and personally. We are available to assist students and parents with educational concerns and we are committed to achieving academic excellence.

This principal expressed confidence in his teachers as professionals and felt that it was his role to provide them with all the support they needed to act professionally.

Another principal talked about empowering staff through their involvement in the budgeting process.

> The two main strategies would be Faculty Council and small group meetings. In Faculty Council, the administration and the department heads meet weekly and there is an expectation that the department heads will take issues to their staff and discuss them and bring back whatever input they get from their staff. The meetings are held twice a year and involve the total staff. We use this in the fall and the spring to begin planning for the next year. We put together a package of results of the various measures of attitude, of achievement and any other measures we have for the school and make it available to each group. Based on the information, staff then suggest results that we can work towards.

Empowering staff through involvement in the budgeting process was a strategy used by all the principals. However, the results that they achieved varied greatly. One principal, in reflecting on the results of low satisfaction of his staff with their involvement in decision-making, expressed it this way. "I'm at a bit of a loss to know why it isn't higher because there is certainly an opportunity for everyone to be heard. Many people feel that their voice has not been heard if the decision is not the one they would have made."

One principal focused on the involvement of all staff in the decision-making process and described it in her school.

> All the staff are in teams and so the head custodian is part of our leadership team. The business manager is part of the support group and the head secretary is in charge of the office. I meet with these groups once a month because I believe it is necessary for them to have information about what is happening in the school and to give me input and feedback. We now make a conscious effort that all staff are staff. What one person is expected to do, they are all expected to do.

She felt that by using the staff meetings to get feedback and input from the staff, the staff felt that they had a part in the running of the school rather than just getting information after the fact.

Another principal described the distribution of resources to the various departments in the school, and the feeling that it empowered staff in the decision-making process.

> The person who was in charge of science last year knew that as a staff we felt we needed more resources in science. It was up to the individual to determine what resources would be acquired

> within the amount allocated. In that respect, the feeling of being involved in the budget process and thereby involved in the decision-making in the school has increased.

Although all the principals recognized the need for staff involvement in decision-making processes in the school, they also recognized that there would be instances when decisions would have to be made without the involvement of staff. They referred to instances where due to the lack of time, due to the lack of information on the part of the staff on a sensitive staffing issue, or lack of information on a financial issue, they had to make the decision without staff input.

How does the principal develop support from outside the school?

All the principals recognized the need for support from outside the school, in particular from the feeder schools, the non-parent community, the business community, and central administration. The principals saw themselves as an integral part of the larger community and felt it was necessary for them and other members of their staff to be actively involved with the community. As one principal stated,"We have passed on to teachers and students this concept that the school is an institution in the community that people will look up to." This principal had worked hard to convey to his students and staff that every one of them had a role to play in the larger community and that preparing them for that role was part of what took place in school.

> It is a sense that we belong in this community, we make a contribution to it, we also have a standing in the community with people looking up to us. It's just that they see this place that is a neat place where kids are positive and wonderful things are happening. I think that is one of the roles schools have because kids should take their learning and transfer it from here into real living.

Marketing is a concept that is new to public service and this principal used marketing of his school as a strategy to gain support.

> We put our honours students in the newspaper. We put signs out all the time. For example we said, "we thank you the community for your support." We are open for learning from September to June so we put it on a yellow sign where the thousands who drive by can see it. It's just a way of saying things.

In this principal's view the best marketing "strategy" involved students. "The best sell is the kids. They go home and into the community and they talk about the school and we get comments back from people saying that this child has never been so happy, so positive, and has never talked so much about school." If his students were caught doing inappropriate things in the community the principal disciplined them at school as he had the strong belief that the students' actions reflected negatively on the school.

Support from the feeder schools was seen to be critical due to the fact that schools depend on each other for enrolment. As one principal stated, the relationship with a neighbouring separate school needed attention so that his school could gain support in the community.

> When we first came to the community, we were coming into a community that had a Catholic elementary-junior high school here for seven years. There were a number of elementary schools in the area but all the public school kids were being bussed out. When we came in and were one hundred metres away from their building, we were perceived to be encroaching on their territory. We needed to do something to ensure that there were good feelings between the two schools. So we did a lot of blended activities, we blended our staffs for various events.

He went on to describe how he developed a positive relationship with the elementary schools that had students that would come to his school in future years.

> We brought our kids together for a number of big events. Everything from line dances to orientation activities, we did some special things

> to give them a sense of community. Participation days--we went on walks in which we would pick up the students from all of our elementary feeder schools. As a result the kids and the members of the community know that we communicate with each other, we know each other and we trust each other. The relationships have been excellent.

Developing partnerships with businesses was a strategy that many principals described as being effective in gaining support from the non-parent community. The principal of a high school had developed a formalized business partnership with a local shopping mall and a hospital, and felt that the partnerships had increased her visibility as well as that of the school in the community. However, another principal expressed his disappointment and frustration about not feeling successful in relation to gaining community support.

> That's an area where I feel some frustration. Certainly we have what we call a "community breakfast" and we try to invite parents as well as other members of the community to it. There are not as many businesses out there clamouring to form these partnerships as there were in the past. In fact, we have not had any businesses that we felt would be mutually beneficial.

The school district had a joint-use agreement with the city that allowed the school facility to be used by the community at large when not being used by the students. One principal felt that in addition to activities such as open house and community barbecues, the use of the school after hours by members of the community had increased awareness and gained support for the school. In addition, his school had a work experience program like the other schools, where the students were in the community and the community got to know the school through them.

All of the principals talked about support from central administration as being critical to the success of their schools. Communication with the associate superintendents was deemed to be necessary by the principals. One principal described a monthly monitoring system that she used to communicate with her associate superintendent. She felt that the monthly reporting would keep the associate superintendent informed about all aspects of the school.

> One of the things that I found I had to put in place was a monthly monitoring system so that I could take everything I had to do in a year, look at as a month. To set the monthly monitoring system I used the Management Purposes of the district. It gave me a very manageable list so that I could take them for example student attitude and I could say alright, where are we with student attitude? What are the indicators that I am using to check that?
>
> I use this as a way to communicate with my associate

> superintendent. It is an easy way for me to flag where things should be or a way to let my supervisor know where she might be able to say to staff "well done."

Reaching out to the community through the curriculum was a strategy used by one respondent. That had been the emphasis in terms of community involvement in her school.

> I really believe that we reach out to the community through the curriculum. We have everything from "Project Business" going all through the school to a work study experience program, where we have students out in local businesses all around the community. We also coordinate community meetings in the school and we look at how we can help our youth in the community. These meetings are open to all people, all stakeholders who have anything to do with youth in the community. We get a lot of people coming to these meetings because they are concerned and want to work as a community to do better things for students.

One principal marketed his school well beyond the boundaries of the immediate community. He along with a colleague from the local university attended and made a presentation at a conference in another province. His presentation was about the school and how it had achieved excellence.

What do you do to develop links between home and school?

All the respondents recognized the importance of strong communication between the home and school and paid particular attention to the relationship due to the fact that it was identified as a priority for all district schools.

Strong communication with the parents and guardians was seen as essential to the development of strong links between the school and the home. Many principals issued monthly newsletters and other forms of written communications to keep the parents informed about the activities in the school and the school district. All the principals surveyed the parents on a regular basis to get feedback from them about things that were happening in the school, and also as part of the budgeting process.

The principals in elementary schools were able to make contact with parents on an individual basis due to the limited size of their schools. Due to the larger size of the high schools, the principals in those locations communicated with parents in different ways from the elementary and junior high school principals. As one high school principal stated: "I will initiate contact sometimes but not on a regular basis. The coordinators have far more of that type of contact with parents than I would."

Another principal of a high school talked about finding an effective way to communicate with the parents of over two thousand students. Although she tried to make contact with as many parents as possible on every occasion, she felt it was a strategy that was not effective.

> It seems to me that trying to make contact with parents whenever one has the chance is more effective than trying to get the parents of two thousand kids together. Then we are assuming that all those parent think the same way. One of the things that we have tried to do is to target parents. For example, we have a night for the parents of students who are preparing for the Advanced Placement exams. Then we have another night for the parents of the students in our Pilot for Success program. I also find that the sporting events bring out another group of parents. It is interesting how many audiences there are in a high school. It is very hard to get them all together. We don't have the luxury of small schools where they can get all the parents together on one night.

However, principals continued to look for ways to communicate with every parent and guardian and did indicate that there were times when contact was made with every parent in the school.

> We phoned every parent for Meet the Teacher Night and I think we had over a thousand parents show up. Now you can only work so many of the crowd, but the parents actually enjoyed seeing one another.

One principal described his role in relation to working with parents as "symbolic", as he has delegated the responsibility for the parent council to the curriculum coordinator in the school. In his role as symbolic leader he made sure that he attended all the major functions in the school and that he greeted parents and maintained a visibility with them. He has also let them know that he was available in the event that they had a concern that they had not been able to resolve with the teacher.

All of the respondents stated that they ensured that parents received information about learning expectations and behaviour expectations for their child. The information was communicated in the school handbooks, and through classroom presentations and newsletters at the beginning of the school year. Some of the principals required the teachers to communicate curriculum expectations for students to parents on an on-going basis.

In what ways do you promote professional development in the school?

In order to create a community of learners, all of the principals expressed the need for the on-going professional development of their staff. Principals referred to a variety of ways in which they promoted the professional development of their staff, from in-school professional development activities to attendance at international conferences.

Many of the principals referred to a professional development plan for the school--one that was tied in to the goals and priorities in the school. As one principal stated:

> We are very lucky because last year we were asked to develop a professional development plan for the school which I thought was one of the best things we could have done. It gave us an umbrella to look at. Everything has to fit under that. That was in place very early this year and it is very easy to see who is and who isn't involved.

Another principal had used the same strategy and described it in this way.

> We have fantastic teachers in the school and we asked ourselves the question "How can we use the resources that we have in the school to help each other learn and grow?" With that focus each teacher creates a plan for themselves for the year. Where do I want to be with my personal and professional goals? Because the goals are also hooked to the priorities for the school there is a direct link as to what their professional development does and the priorities of the school. I make it clear to staff that the professional development has to be within your goals which are within the school philosophy and beliefs and priorities.

The 'professionalism of staff' was a descriptor that was used by all of the principals as they discussed the quality of teaching and learning in their schools. This resulted in some principals allowing the staff to direct their own professional development. One principal described his staff as "mavericks" and encouraged them "to be independent, make their own decisions, take responsibility and pride themselves on their professionalism." In his school, he guided the professional development of staff through discussion on an individual basis. Another principal who had directed the professional development of her staff reflected on moving to greater self-directed professional development:"I really believe that I need to let go of that a little bit and delegate that to the people who are in the decision-making and know what is best in terms of their own professional development."

Another strategy that was commonly used by the principals was to conduct in-school study sessions for their staff. One principal had a shortened school day once a week to accommodate this.

> This year we opted for the early dismissal of children and we use one Thursday a month for professional development. The focus for professional development in our school this year has been identified by the staff as accommodating individual differences. So we may bring in resource people who can help us in this area. We have taken time to look at assessment and in

particular portfolio assessment.

The district allowed the school to have two professional development days a year. Principals indicated that the days were increasingly being used for school planning kinds of activities and for the preparation of the annual budget. Staff in the schools had been delegated the responsibility for these days, and they conducted the planning for the activity.

Although the principals cited shrinking financial resources as a concern in the on-going professional development of their staff, they expressed confidence that with the support of the district's consulting services, their staff could continue to learn and grow.

Summary

The data provided by the seven respondents represented a comprehensive and rich understanding of the role of the school principal in a highly decentralized school district. The role of the principal is a highly complex and varied one. Principals described the numerous actions that are required in the role. They described the need for a personal vision for their school--one that they could use as the catalyst for the development of a shared sense of purpose or mission for all the stakeholders in the school community. The vision for the school was communicated to the different stakeholder groups through newsletters and handbooks and in addition to these strategies every effort was made to reflect the vision in the day-to-day practices in the school. Quality teaching was a primary focus for the work of principals. Supervision of instruction and the on-going professional development of the staff were viewed as critical elements for the success of the school. In addition, a strong emphasis on curriculum and the use of a variety of instructional and assessment strategies to meet individual student needs was promoted in the schools. Principals established high expectations for learning and also for behaviour in order to establish a positive climate for learning in the schools. Staff and students were encouraged to take risks and were provided with incentives.

Principals devoted a tremendous amount of time to developing and maintaining a strong relationship with the students and their parents. The principals ensured that students had a voice in the decisions that affected them and sought to involve students in leadership activities throughout the school. They viewed parent participation in the education of their children as critical to the success of the school and employed a variety of strategies to secure this involvement. Community-at-large involvement in the school was an area that produced much frustration due to the fact that they had experienced limited success in this area. The principals expressed that political awareness and the ability to plan strategically were emerging as important and necessary dimensions of their work. Finally, a desire to work with people and strong communication skills were identified as essential attributes for success in the role.

CHAPTER 5

THEMES DERIVED FROM THE DATA

Abrahamson (cited in Berg, 1989) and Van Manen (1984) both view themes as very meaningful ways to interpret the meanings of our experiences. The intent of this chapter is to highlight the themes that were derived from the data collected from the seven principals in the study. The themes are: (1) building a vision, (2) sharing the dream--involving others, (3) growth--a basis for change, and (4) shared leadership.

Building a Vision

The fact that the respondents possessed a philosophical foundation in relation to education, both personally and for the school, emerged as a predominant theme in the data. All of the respondents discussed a vision that they had for education and for their school in particular. It provided the respondents with focus and guided their priorities in the school which were then translated into everyday actions. The vision that they shared referred to both goals and processes.

All of the respondents said that initially they had begun with their vision for the school but as they worked in the school they had developed a vision with the staff, students and parents of their school. As one principal expressed it: "Initially it was my vision; but as we began to add staff and as we began to add people into the equation, it became very much a shared vision." The notion that vision building is a dynamic and fluid relationship was apparent as respondents talked about the vision for the school and how it developed. In the words of one respondent,"The rule is nothing is etched in stone. All rules can be changed. Anything we have decided, we can change at any time. There can always be different ways of looking at things but I think the fact is everyone feels that they are heard, and everyone feels that they are important."

The quality of depth in the respondents' dialogue about vision was clearly evident. The extent to which the principals held the vision personally was demonstrated clearly with statements that began with " I believe strongly that..." All of the respondents referred to modelling as an essential dimension in building the vision. As one principal described it: "We also share visions by what we do everyday." The clarity in the vision was evidenced by the referral to specific images. Images of "the school being a place where kids want to be", "academic success for every student", "an atmosphere where kids are able to learn and demonstrate that they are able to learn and experience success", "quality education offered to every child", were shared by the respondents. The responsibility demonstrated by the principals for the vision was unwavering. All the respondents shared that the school was theirs and they were responsible and accountable. They took ownership and were actively engaged in creating the organization of the school. Principals expressed confidence that they were the ones that could bring about change in the schools and no reference was made to central administration or the provincial government's department of education in relation to the changes in the school. As one principal aptly put it: "In order to be a principal, one has to want to be a leader. I don't think that you can find a reluctant leader as a good principal because one has to want to be in command. I mean commanding in the best sense of the word, not the negative."

Principals stated the need for all members of the school community to share the vision in order for the school to be successful. Being able to select staff who had the same philosophy was a condition that two principals identified as helping them to be successful. As one principal expressed it:

> I like it when people take initiative, I encourage that. I let people take leadership and encourage them to take risks. I think it is important to know who these people are. When I hire new staff I look for individuals that are philosophically similar to me.

No two principals had the same vision or utilized the same strategies to build a vision for their school. The strategies that were chosen were both situational and relational.

Sharing the Dream - Involving Others

The involvement of others in the school was high on the list of priorities on the principals' agendas. The principals talked about involvement in relation to every aspect of decision-making in the school and viewed it as a requirement in the work that they did in the school. The involvement was not limited to teachers. Also included were other school staff (secretaries, business managers, aides and custodians), students, parents and members of the community-at-large.

The involvement of staff

The involvement of teaching staff focused on matters relating to curriculum and instruction, discipline, and the annual school plan which many of the principals referred to as the budget. Instructional leadership had been delegated to department heads, assistant principals and curriculum coordinators by all the respondents although the principals were active participants in the processes implemented to achieve goals in this area. Teachers were regarded as professionals and thus were supported to act independently in relation to instruction. As the curriculum was mandated by the provincial government, principals encouraged the teachers to take risks with the delivery of the curriculum so that all students could be successful. One principal described the involvement of the teachers in instructional matters this way:

> I know the curriculum but I don't know it as well as my teachers do, so I rely on them. I look at the results and we talk about that. They need to have the resources and they need to know that the children are using those resources constructively.

Principals talked about using the strengths on their staff and described the many ways in which they encouraged staff to work as peer support teams. It was their belief that staff ownership for the directions in the school would result in a greater probability of success of any initiatives in the area. The involvement of staff in student discipline matters was discussed by all the respondents. Principals involved their staffs in the development of school discipline plans and then held them responsible for the implementation. One principal in describing the involvement of his staff in addressing a discipline problem reflected the comments of the other principals: "They certainly demonstrated that they want to be part of our solving a very serious problem." The principals made reference to a school budget plan which was developed on an annual basis and approved by the Board of Trustees of the school district, and the opportunities for staff involvement. The strategies that principals used to involve staff varied greatly. In larger schools staff had involvement through department committees while in the smaller schools all staff were involved. Staff were involved in setting the results to be achieved in each of the areas listed under the Management Purposes for the district and developing the plan to achieve the results. On an on-going basis throughout the school year, principals involved their staffs in the expenditure of funds to achieve the results identified in the school plan. All the staff were given the opportunity for involvement in the budget but many principals reported a concern that from information that they had from attitude survey results, staff had expressed low levels of satisfaction in relation to their involvement in the decision-making processes in the school.

The involvement of students

Just as they did with staff, principals viewed students as important players in the decision-making process. The principals attempted to involve students in every aspect of the school program that affected them directly or indirectly. Principals involved students in the development of the school discipline plan and the budget. In one school, the principal involved students in staff selection by allowing them to serve on staff selection committees. School activities such as school dances, graduations, special events and school orientation activates were planned and implemented by the students with staff members acting as advisors. The student advisor program, the Crime Stoppers Board, Student Council, Conflict Resolution teams and similar strategies were all used by the principals to involve students in the decision-making process.

The involvement of parents

All principals talked about parents being in partnership with the school in the education of the children. The principals used a variety of strategies to involve parents. Many principals worked with the parents to form a Parent Advisory Council though the principal's role in relation to the council was strictly advisory. This was predicated on the belief that if the principal was to be held accountable, the principal should be the ultimate decision-maker. Serving as an active member on the parent advisory council would put the principal in an untenable situation. Principals shared that in schools where the student population was not too large, it was easier to get to know and involve the parents. The degree to which parents got involved in the school appeared to be the greatest in the elementary schools and least at the senior high school level. Two principals stressed the need to find more appropriate strategies for the involvement of parents at the high school level. Principals shared that parents were also involved in providing input on every aspect of the school program--the budget, the school plan, the selection of staff and the expenditure of funds--though the level of parent involvement appeared to vary from school to school. Asking parents to volunteer in the school was seen as a first step to involving parents, by all principals. However, many principals had outgrown this level of involvement and had progressed to involving parents in what they viewed as the more important issues relating to their children's education. As one principal stated:

> Being a new school, we were involving parents way out at the front end of things. I think part of our success has been to involve parents in some of the meaningful things. I believe that important things such as the dress code, code of conduct and reporting student progress are the issues that parents should be involved in.

Principals had identified key parents in the school and used them to "spread the word." These same parents acted as a "sounding board" for the principals.

Involvement of the community-at-large

Although all the principals recognized their responsibility to involve the larger community in the school, success in this area was elusive to many principals. Principals were involved in community activities in order to increase their personal visibility in the community and had taken steps to ensure that community members were informed about the school and the activities of the school. Principals distributed school newsletters in the community and principals often visited businesses in the community. Many of the schools had informal business partnerships. This can best be described as a relationship where the support from the business was primarily of benefit to the school. Principals expressed a need to develop business partnerships that were mutually beneficial. One principal was successful in establishing a formalized business partnership with a shopping mall and with a hospital, the benefits of which were described as mutual.

Growth - A basis for change

Leadership for change was central to the discussion with the respondents. All the respondents talked about change--in the organization of the school, in the operation of the school,in the delivery of curriculum and instruction, in the standards and in the communication patterns in the school--and the strategies that they had used to make it less threatening for all the members of the school community. The notion of growth was an ideal that the principals used in their schools. Growth was used synonymously with learning and the respondents talked about growth for the students, the staff, themselves and the parents. The principals expressed the view that since the school was an institution for learning in the community, it facilitated the promotion of learning for all those associated with it.

Learning for staff

Learning for the staff was promoted by the principals through risk-taking, professional development and problem-solving. Many principals talked about encouraging their staff to take risks and assured the staff that they were there to support them if things did not work out. Support for risk-taking was tangible and intangible. Most often support for risk-taking was expressed in the form of personal notes or one-on-one feedback. One principal used incentives for risk-taking and allowed staff to choose a professional development activity as a reward. Principals made frequent references to instances where they had learned--from their students, from their staff, from their parents. No one person was viewed as having a monopoly on good ideas. One principal made specific reference to the sources of her learning:

> I have been able to see effective leaders in action, see what they do, see why what they do works so well. I have taken a lot of what they do and put it into my own repertoire.

All principals had strategies to address the professional development of staff. School professional development plans tied to the school plan and individual professional development plans were the predominant strategies used by the principals. Peer support teams, delegation, and journalling were also used as strategies for professional development. One principal promoted his staff as resource persons to other schools in the district and outside the district and described this as an extremely effective professional development strategy. Principals acted as advocates for their staff both within and outside the school.

Learning for students

All principals viewed student learning as the primary purpose of the school. The focus of the learning was situational, but many principals identified "the academics" as the priority for learning with their students. Some of the respondents talked about learning in relation to behaviour, and were actively involved in helping students to learn about the expectations for behaviour. Students were also encouraged to take risks with their learning and principals encouraged staff to use a variety of teaching and learning strategies to promote this. One principal described the goal that he had for his students.

> When a young girl in grade 8 said to the newspaper person, "When I get to grade twelve things are going to be different because we are not going to put up with this nonsense of violence and hitting and fighting," you know that you have made a major contribution to that girl's perspective on life. She is going to be a thinker and she is going to live by her wits in the next twenty, thirty years. That is what our children are going to have to be able to do.

The underlying principle for all principals was "all students can learn."

Learning for parents

All the respondents accepted that they had a responsibility to assist in the learning process with parents. Learning for the parents was focused on the education of their children so parents were assisted in learning about curriculum, about parenting, about recognizing growth in learning with their children, and about education in general. Principals conducted study sessions for the parents and made themselves available to parents to discuss educational issues.

Learning for the community-at-large

The wider community was seen as part of the audience of the principals' efforts. It was recognized by all the respondents that in order for public education to survive, each of them had a role to play in maintaining the support of the community-at-large. As one principal stated, "I think it is very important to be aware that there is a community out there beyond the school." Another principal stated that through the involvement of the school with the community, there was a collaborative effort in doing better things for students.

Shared Leadership

Empowerment of staff, students and parents was the extension of the empowerment of the principals in the study. The notion of the principal as "a leader of leaders" was reflected in the comments from the respondents.

All the respondents worked to develop the leadership amongst the staff--teachers, support staff and custodians. Instructional leadership responsibility had been delegated to teachers and other leaders in the school and principals provided support for this through the allocation of additional resources or time. Principals talked about creating teams and every staff member was viewed as a change agent. Ideas emanated from every segment of the school and no one person had a monopoly on good ideas.

Principals recognized staff for their efforts and encouraged them to reflect on the vision and practices in the school in order to keep things moving in the right direction. Teachers were central to decision-making in the schools.

Student leadership was integral to the concept of leadership in the school and the notion of every student as leader was in place in many schools. Starting in the elementary school, principals supported the development of student leadership through school activities such as family groupings, students' council and conflict resolution teams. Principals continued these efforts in the secondary schools and added activities such as service to the community, work-study programs and participation on staff selection committees as strategies to further develop student leadership. All principals provided students with the opportunity for a voice in the budget of the school. Principals sought input from students on all matters that would impact the students directly such as the school discipline plan and the attendance policy. Principals recognized students for their efforts and also provided incentives for students.

All the respondents demonstrated a "bias for action." They demonstrated this in their comments by the numerous activities that they described in their schools. They developed ownership by introducing things on a small scale and provided for reflection during the process of implementation. All the principals had created a shared reality in the school and promoted consistent messages about that reality to everyone in the school.

All the respondents prioritized their work and ensured that the essential things got done. However, many of the respondents expressed some guilt about this. The ability to reflect on one's leadership was viewed as being critical to success in the role and one principals described it this way:

> I have always analyzed. Am I starting to slack off here? That is a tough thing, trying to be really honest with yourself. I asked the teachers if they had respect for my leadership and if there was something about it that really bothered them. I am constantly in dialogue with them.

Monitoring of the school plan was an important aspect of the principals' work. Principals referred to the use of achievement test results, attitude survey results, diploma exam results and financial statements to monitor the plans to achieve results. Principals used these to provide information to the staff and to other stakeholders and adjustments were made on an on-going basis.

All the respondents described their role and responsibilities as being multi-faceted and demanding.

They expressed that one had to have stamina and also the ability to balance one's professional life with one's personal life in order to survive and feel successful in the role of principal in a decentralized school district.

Summary

A number of themes emerged from the data collected through interviews with the seven principals. A predominant theme was having a vision for the school and education. The involvement of others in sharing that vision and creating an enterprise that was shared by all was closely linked to the first theme. The notion of growth expressed in terms of learning, for everyone in the school community and shared leadership also emerged as themes.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, REFLECTIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the findings from the study, the researcher's personal reflection on the literature and the practices of principals, and a discussion of the implications for practice and future research.

Summary of the major findings of the study

The examination of the practices of selected effective principals in one urban highly decentralized school district offers some insights into the highly complex nature of the role. During the course of the interviews, as the principals reflected on their practices as leader in a school, a clearer understanding of the role emerged.

All principals understood that the district held them responsible and accountable for all aspects of the school and its program. The role and responsibilities were clearly stated in a role and responsibility statement for the principal and encompassed the areas of student performance, student attitudes, staff performance, staff attitudes, parent attitudes, community attitudes, physical assets and finances.

Fundamental to the role of principal was having a vision for the school and for education in general. Many principals stressed that one needed to believe in something strongly and also have the desire to make a difference in the world. Building a shared vision for the school with staff, students, parents and the community-at-large had become an underpinning of the philosophical base from which the principals operated. Principals used a variety of strategies to build that vision and worked continuously to keep that vision dynamic and fluid. The principals' vision exemplified the qualities of depth, clarity and responsibility.

Communicating the vision, the mission and goals of the school was ongoing and achieved through both written and verbal forms. Newsletters, handbooks and a variety of written communications from the principal reinforced the mission and goals of the school. This was furthered by the interaction that the principals had on a one-on-one basis with staff, student, parents and members of the community-at-large. Modelling was a strategy frequently used by all the principals.

The promotion of quality teaching and learning was a primary focus for all the principals. The academics were cited as the priority in many schools, though all principals shared that the school served to develop the whole child. Success for every student in relation to learning and behaviour was a goal articulated by many principals. Principals viewed the teachers as professionals and worked to develop environments where this professionalism could be fostered. Professional development, delegation of authority for decisions and involvement in decision-making were used as strategies to achieve this. Team planning, team teaching and peer support were also identified as effective strategies in developing a climate of professionalism in the school. Principals had delegated the supervision and evaluation of the performance of staff to other leaders in the school and a variety of processes were utilized to carry out performance evaluation. Although principals had delegated the responsibility for this activity, they were involved in monitoring this by frequent visits to classroom, by conversations with staff and students, through journalling and by generally being visible in the school.

All principals focused on maintaining a safe and caring climate for learning in the school. Principals had standards and high expectation for themselves and also for the students and staff. The principals talked about supporting students and teachers and encouraging them to take risks. Incentives were provided for both staff and students. The lack of standards at the district level did not stop the principals from developing standards for their schools. They had developed standards for learning, behaviour and involvement in the school. This was an area in which many principals felt they were not very successful.

The principals understood that the district held them responsible and accountable for all aspects of the school and its programs. All principals practised shared leadership and staff, students and parents were encouraged to take a leadership role in the school. The principals acted as leaders of leaders and the belief that "everyone is a leader" resulted in students exercising several leadership roles in the school. Conflict resolution teams, students' council, school ambassadors and service to the community were used often as strategies to develop student leadership.

All the principals involved staff, students and parents in the decision-making processes in the school. Involvement of staff extended to the support and custodial staff and was not limited to the teaching staff. The principals actively involved all groups in formulating the school plan or budget for the school and all groups took an active role in monitoring progress in relation to the school plan.

Principals stressed the need to establish strong links between the home and school and made frequent references to the parents being in partnership with the school. Principals encouraged parents to be actively involved in the school. Many principals talked about this involvement in terms of parents volunteering in the school and all the principals expressed the need to move to higher levels of involvement on the part of parents. Principals stated that parents responding to educational issues and working with the school to keep the vision dynamic were the ideals for which they strived.

Garnering and maintaining support from the community-at-large was increasingly becoming an issue for the principals. Some of the principals actively pursued the support of this segment of the community while others had difficulty achieving results in this area. Principals were involved with community groups and maintained a visibility in the community through visits to the businesses and other institutions.

To conclude, all principals described the expectation for the role to be extremely demanding but understood and accepted the expectations for the role, and had the desire to be successful. Balancing one's professional life with one's personal life was a priority and many principals stressed that this was a requirement for survival in the role of principal in a highly decentralized school district.

Summary of Themes

From the data gathered from the seven principals in the study, several themes relating to the practices of principals in highly decentralized district emerged. The most obvious was that effective principals had a vision for their school and for education, and that they worked to build the vision for the school with all the members of the school community.

All the principals sought the active involvement of staff, students and parents in the decision-making processes in the school. Staff were considered as professionals and the delegation of instructional leadership in the school promoted increased professionalism.

Change was central to the work of all the principals and the principals alluded to change in terms of growth and learning. Learning was not limited to the student population; it extended to the staff, the parents and the community-at-large. Principals also alluded to their personal learning and growth.

Shared leadership was practised by all the principals and staff, students and parents assumed leadership roles in the schools. Everyone in the school was seen as a leader and the practices of the principals promoted this.

Finally, principals expressed that the role of the principals in a highly decentralized district was complex and extremely demanding. They viewed the school as theirs and demonstrated a commitment through their comments. Their comments further reinforced the need for individuals to balance one's professional life with one's personal life in order to survive and be successful in the principalship.

Personal Reflections on the Literature

In reflecting on the literature in relation to the findings of this study, strong congruencies and few discrepancies emerged. The movement away from transactional leadership to transformational leadership as described by Caldwell and Spinks (1993) and Sergiovanni (1991) was reflected in the data provided by the principals in the study. Principals apparently were united with all the members of the school community in the pursuit of common higher level goals. As well the findings supported the idea that successful principals were strong educational leaders with strong views about schooling, learning and teaching as described by Sergiovanni (1991).

The principals practised "purposing" which was described by Sergiovanni (1991) as actions that elicited from others clarity, consensus and commitment to the basic purposes and values. Fullan (1988) refers to this action as "building a vision." The involvement of staff referred to in the literature as empowerment

(Fullan, 1988; Caldwell and Spinks, 1993 & Bolman and Deal, 1991) was a priority with all principals and was extended to include students and parents. The principals employed a variety of leadership styles, supporting the theory that leadership behaviour is defined by situational characteristics such as motives, interests, beliefs and behaviours of other members of the school community (Bolman and Deal, 1991). Principals displayed behaviours that ranged from ordinary to the heroic (Sergiovanni, 1991). Principals felt that it was important to stand for something, to believe in it and communicate this to others, which represented the traits of successful leaders as described by Sergiovanni (1991). Principals acted as leaders and focused on doing the right things, rather than doing things right and supported the research of Bennis and Nanus (1985) with the descriptions of their actions. Many of the principals described their efforts to create a learning organization as described by Senge (1990). The descriptions provided by the principal also supported moral leadership, servant leadership and successful leadership as presented by Sergiovanni (1991 and 1992).

The principals' relations with the community-at-large was only touched upon in the literature (Fullan, 1988 and Duttweiler, 1990). Principals were urged to seek alliances with individuals external to the system, but there is a dearth of literature on the empowerment of this segment of the community to be part of the decision-making processes in the school.

The New Breed of Principal - Superman or Superwoman

The new breed of principal will have to be individuals who are well prepared. Having total responsibility for a school, its students, its staff, its parents and its community almost seems overwhelming. Add to that the facility and the finances and it may be enough to push one off the edge. Strong communication, leadership, planning and evaluation skills will be a necessity. The ability to inspire, communicate well, plan strategically, understand the dynamics of local, provincial and national politics and the desire to serve in addition to a well-grounded personal philosophy will be requirements for the role. One cannot help but wonder if what will be required are superhuman-beings. Principals will need training and high levels of support to be successful in the role of principal in the schools of the future.

Implications for practice

The description of the practices of effective principals indicates that the individuals are required to possess a repertoire of skills that go well beyond those used in a classroom. Training programs aimed at preparing individuals for the principalship in a decentralized district are required to assist individuals and school district prepare for the challenges that will confront us in the future.

Principals expressed that they did not have much opportunity to meet with colleagues and share the many good things that were happening. The district should consider facilitating principals' meeting on a regular basis so that systematic sharing of good ideas can take place.

The empowerment of the community-at-large was problematic for many of the principals. The district should provide support for the initiatives in this area so that a consistent level of success can be achieved.

For Future Research

As more and more school districts across the world move to school-based management, the practices of principals in decentralized school districts in the different countries may be worth researching. The assumption is that they would vary considerably and the strategies in one location may prove to be invaluable in another location.

Principals described their concerted actions to empower staff in the decision-making processes in the school. However, on attitude surveys the staff have consistently indicated low levels of satisfaction with their influence on the decision-making processes in their school. It may be worthwhile to research the factors that contribute to staff satisfaction with their involvement in decision-making processes in the school.

There was very little literature on the empowerment of the community-at-large in the decision-making processes in schools. It is critical that research be conducted in this area as there seems to be a move politically to school councils as the governing structure in basic education in many parts of the world. The comments from the principals identified this as an emerging and extremely important aspect of their work in a highly decentralized school district.

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Appendix A

Role and Responsibility Statement for Principal

For the school, in accordance with law, board policy, and administrative directives, the principal shall be responsible for:

The conduct and outcome of all programs both curricular and co-curricular.

Evaluating and reporting student learning and development.

The attitude of students toward self, others, school, and education.

The safety, welfare, and conduct of students while participating in school programs or on their way to or from school on transportation provided by the district.

The attitude of staff toward the students and parents, toward other staff, the schools, the district, and its programs.

The selection, assignment, training, performance, professional growth and advancement, evaluation, retention, transfer, promotion, reprimand, demotion, and separation of all staff.

The attitude of the parents and the community toward the school, the district, and its programs.

The condition of the physical assets; these shall include the neatness and cleanliness of the buildings and grounds and the safety, security, and state of maintenance and repair of the buildings, grounds, furnishings, and equipment, except to the extent that responsibility has been assigned to a department of the district.

The accommodation and district transportation of students.

The planning and control of the expenditure of all funds.

Additional duties and obligations assigned by the associate superintendent of schools.

Role and Responsibility Statement for Principals
(Edmonton Public Schools, 1993 (p.14)

Appendix B

Sample Transcript

Sample Transcript

UP

You have been identified as an effective principal in a decentralized school district. What do you think makes you effective?

Well, I think that first and foremost you have to have some kind of vision. Sometimes I hate the word vision because we use it in the wrong context but I believe that I have learned how to become someone who wants to make the world a better place. Along with that goes a vision about what education could be vs. what it is and I think that's the starting point of effectiveness is to have some idea of where a principal wants to go from where they are. I believe that has to be backed up with research, it has to be backed up with study and it has to be backed up with direct observation and experiences. So that would be one that I believe is most important.

UP

In terms of the vision that you have for your school, how do you share that vision with the staff, what strategies do you use to share the vision with the staff?

This is really important. I think that the vision is shared first and foremost through the leadership team and one of the things that has made our organization effective is to develop a leadership team. A team of people in our school that are leaders. I meet with those leaders once a week and share my vision. Always an aspect of our meeting is sharing my vision and discussing theirs.

The second way that I share the vision is through weekly staff meetings, they are very short and sweet, fifteen minute staff meetings in the mornings. They always contain an element of my vision and/or an element of sharing visions among staff. Sometimes it is very, very simple, sometimes it is a little bit more complex. We also share visions by what we do everyday. What we comment on, what we chose as leaders to recognize, what we choose as leaders to ignore, those are all parts of the yes and no aspects of the vision.

A third or fourth way is through teacher journalling. This has been a very powerful tool that I have used at [name of school] a very effective tool for helping people understand their own vision and helping them develop a sense of joint vision.

Lastly, I would say that having the vision filter down through the leadership team to other people rather than just being the principal's vision. It has to become a shared vision and that is worked on through the teaming that we do.

UP

Could you tell me a little more about the journalling strategy that you use?

Well, I really believe that when we talk about our practices and when we write about our practices it helps to clarify what we do that is good. We have a journalling process whereby teachers write to me once a week on a given topic or theme and/or whatever they would like to write about. I respond as in a language arts journal and it gives me a chance to find out what people are thinking, it gives me a chance to develop leadership skills. Gives teachers my ear and leaders my ear about things that maybe are bothering them or that they would like to resolve. It lets me put my thumb on the pulse of the school, the heartbeat of the school. Very powerful process for helping teachers develop themselves as teachers in the classroom as well.

UP
Is the process of journalling an optional one or is it a mandatory one?

It is sort of half and half. It is an expectation that I have that all teachers will journal. Some teachers don't for a week or so and then I'll just check back and I will say, "Oh, I haven't heard from you recently, write me a little bit". Certainly some people feel more comfortable communicating that way than others. I do encourage all staff to make us of that and most of them do.

UP

How have you involved the parents in terms of getting involved and shaping the vision for your school?

Being a new school of course we were involving parents way out at the front end of things. I think it is really important, I think part of our success has been to involve parents in some of the meaningful things. For example we purposefully stayed away from fund raising. It has come from our parents at the last PAC meeting but that is the first time. I don't believe that is a function. I believe that the important things like what should the dress code and conduct be in the school. How should we be reporting progress. What is meaningful to expect in terms of range of learners in classrooms. What is meaningful to expect in, reasonable to expect in terms of personal programming. These are all issues that we have taken to our parents and have discussed and have allowed them to see the results of their input and so I think that,

that part, meaningful input is very, very important rather than token input.

For another example I really don't care how many volunteers we have in the school and I know that some people are really crazy about that. I would, my goal is that every parent be actively involved in the education of their own child and if we can achieve that goal I think that we've done a lot.

UP
So is the involvement of the parents in terms of the education of their child one of the goals of the school?

Yes, very much so. And we do have volunteers and we do have some of those other add on things as well.

UP
You've talked about how you communicate the vision of the school to the staff, how is it communicated to students and to parents.

Well, I will start with students. We do have assemblies, but what we have done is we have broken down our student groups into smaller groups. We have key groups of students, and this is the old homeroom concept where we have one staff member in charge of a group of twenty-five students for three years so that becomes a cohort cohesive kind of group.

Then, secondly we have what is called year teams which is year seven, year eight and year nine teams. These teams meet as a group of students and teachers to do a variety of different activities. These groups meet on a regular basis and we try to keep the focus curricular and I think that is really important. We do a lot of team building kinds of things, about our school and creating a vision about who [name of school] was, what were the values and ethics that she stood for. We constantly talk to students about what it is we are, what makes a good person, what makes a good student. We talk a lot about those things. We also do some of the spirit building kinds of things but we keep those a little bit more to a minimum. We're concerned with the education of those young people and how they develop a sense of values and what's right and wrong.

So the vision is interpreted through the key teachers, through the student leaders in each of the key teacher groups. The student leadership team is an all inclusive group, it includes a lot of students in the school. Through a variety of different assembly kinds of activities where students are working together and talking to each other about the school and the vision for the school.

UP

The communication of that vision to the parent group?

Parents hear it mainly from me however, we also have a number of strategies where they hear it from staff. One of the strategies we use is called an Open Door Evening. The purpose of the Open Door Evening is to educate parents about what it is we do and why we do what we do. The Open Door Evening involves all the staff and it runs four to five times a year. The parents are just allowed to drop into classrooms, talk about curriculum, talk about what is going on in the school and it is a really good chance for us to share what we do and why we do what we do with parents.

We have a number of key parents in our school and I work very closely with those key parents. They spread the word to our elementary schools. We have a representative our school parent group in each of our elementary school councils and in the high school councils that our kids feed into. So they carry our vision and our mission and what we are all about at [name of school] to those other areas as well, which I think is really important.

UP

You talk a little bit about the student leadership in the school. Can you tell me more about the opportunities and initiatives that you have in place to develop student leadership.

First of all we have an all inclusive philosophy about leadership about extra-curricular activities. That means that any students that shows a desire and a willingness and a dedication to being there can be there. We do not have a formal elected student council. For that reason our group is very large. The natural leaders tend to emerge and as they do they are given more responsibility within that group. That group again, I think the function of the student council formerly has kind of been, lets plan the next dance and they do that but they also have a lot of input into a number of different issues in the school. For example when we were first formulating our school they wrote up the behaviour policy for the school. They wrote it up as they saw it, what should it be, what should we allow what shouldn't be allowed, what are the kinds of consequences that should be in place. They also looked at progress reporting. What do you want your parents to know about what you know and can do. So again we get them involved in some meaningful decisions where they can see the results of their actions. We also, although we have teacher advisors, we depend a lot on our leaders in our student group. We do some formal training with them, some formal leadership training where they are involved in finding out how to make decisions, deal with people in conflict and so on. We usually do that in the spring for the next year.

UP

And is that done as a complimentary course?

It is done as an extra-curricular activity.

UP

In terms of teaching and learning in the school - what strategies do you use to promote quality teaching?

Well, this is heart of where I think leadership needs to go. I believe that what happens in the classrooms in instruction is the most important part of my job.

First and foremost I teach. I know there is a lot of controversy about whether principals should or shouldn't teach but I really believe that also by teaching I am also learning what is going on and that I can get a better feel for what some of the teaching difficulties might be in the classroom.

First and foremost I think we have written up on paper, in words what makes a good teacher and what are some of the indicators, some of the things we see in the classroom if good teaching is going on. So everyone knows what those things are and strives to do those things.

The second thing is that I believe that teachers need feedback. I think they need regular feedback and I am not just talking about performance appraisals. I am talking about regular feedback on strategies and things that are happening in the classroom. We make sure that our teachers have a lot of feedback on what is being seen in their classes from our administrative and leadership team and from other teachers because we do run a mentorship program where we pair teachers up with each other. They go in and observe each other's classrooms and talk about strategies that they are using. I also think it is really important to keep looking at what are the strategies that we are using now and what could we be doing to be more effective. What are the stumbling blocks in our way? This year particularly in math and science, we are looking at that. We know how we want to teach science, we know how we are. What is the stumbling block that is standing in our way from doing that. Then, how do we remove that? So I think modelling is very important. Most teachers are very isolated, they close their door and that is where they are. They don't get a chance to be in other people's classrooms to feedback people, things that work that don't work. A really important part of that is the team concept that we have where teachers are all working on the same aspect of curriculum and have a chance to talk to other people. What are you doing? How did this work? Can you help me with this? The idea of using expertise among the team. It is a very powerful tool.

UP

In terms of the team concept - how is that organized?

In our school it is organized on a year group level so we have a year seven, year eight, year nine team of teachers. At the year seven level all teachers teach core, meaning everything to their own group of students. At the eight and nine level all teachers teach what we call semi-core. We have a humanities aspect and a math, science and technologies aspect.

So every classroom would have two main teachers for their core and then the teachers team to work with two groups. One peculiarity about our school is that each of these teams has a team leader. That person is a designated teaching associate. So they have no time but a slight remuneration. They lead what we call "team time" which is joint time set aside on the timetable so all of these people can meet together. The team leader or lead teacher facilitates that time that the time spent is spent talking about curriculum and teaching strategies, not about "administrivia" nor necessarily about individual students but curriculum and planning and this has been very well used and in fact it is allowing a lot of consistency to exist amongst what is happening in the classes.

UP

When you evaluate the performance of your staff and I want to use the word staff, because it goes beyond just the teacher, what strategies do you use to evaluate their performance?

We have a, sometimes I think too comprehensive, evaluation process. First and foremost I think it is important to set the results that people are responsible for. So we have a role and responsibility statement for each teacher and that's set out very definitely at the beginning of the year. Then I give each teacher a copy of the indicators that would indicate good performance and again they are fairly comprehensive, there are a lot of them but it gives teachers some very specific things, these are the things I would see in the classroom if you are being successful. Then throughout the year as I go into classrooms or as my team goes into classrooms to observe we do what we call "informal classroom observations" basically just anecdotal kinds of things and then at the end of the year we do a final performance appraisal based on the role and responsibility statements and the indicators of success. That tends to be a written document and it is a summative kind of thing. Throughout the year the formative part is the feedback after the classrooms and the development.

UP

In terms of the formative, is that ongoing?

Yes, very much so. We are in classrooms a lot and we will give teachers informal feedback a great deal. We especially work with our first year teachers and our new to district teachers in terms of that because they require more frequent feedback, often monthly.

UP

What processes do you use to monitor learning in your school?

Well, this is one that we are really working on it's I think very important to have an idea of exactly what students are expected to know for each grade level. We set indicators, grade level indicators, for all subject areas. We did it in prototype last year, this year we are looking at it again because we are not happy with it. These indicators say what students should know and be able to do for each grade level. Then it is a matter of designing assessment tasks around those things. In June of last year we worked on a joint assessment task among the whole school, that students would do at each grade level to determine what they know and can do in the four core subject areas. Because of so many of the indicators are in the area of attitudes and skills we find that our performance assessments have to be - have to have a paper and pencil component but they have to have far beyond that so we have developed tasks, performance tasks for each of the grade levels for subject areas and my vision would be that these tasks would begin to happen more often throughout the school year rather than at the term times when we are doing some formal assessment.

UP

What factors have influenced you in terms of setting standards for learning and teaching in this school.

I guess as a principal the first thing that I saw that bothered me was that I saw that we have a huge discrepancy in what we think and believe as teachers is good performance and as much as we like to believe that we are all assessing in the same way I really believe we are not, I believe we are all over the map. That bothers me because I don't know how we can be accountable to our public and how we can be accountable to our students if we really are so disparate in what we are expecting of students in terms of performance. So to me that was a real driving factor. We have got to get it together. We have to all know and we have to have some consistency from teacher to teacher in what we expect kids to do, how we are delivering instruction and certainly how we are assessing. To my way of thinking the only way to go about doing that is to start getting teachers working together on it.

UP
What are your priorities in establishing a climate for learning in the school?

In a junior high school the name of the game to use an old term is discipline. I like to use the term classroom climate but there is no question that there has to be an environment in the school where the students feel safe, where they can risk because learning involves risk, and where students and staff feel that there are positive attitudes, because positive attitudes are really positive to learning.

Then it is a matter of going about a daily plan to establish that. I think first and foremost my presence and the way in which I operate is a big model here. I think that on our leadership team we emphasize positive attitudes, we emphasize dealing with problems but keeping an upbeat kind of way of doing it. Because we are close as a team and we work so close with our staff, if somebody is starting to lose it a little bit it becomes far more apparent and there's a kind of a network that clicks in to assist that person.

The same happens with students. Because students themselves really appreciate that positive classroom climate and school climate, we talk about it a lot and a lot of times I will pull in groups of leaders and maybe not just the leadership team but the kids that are the positive leaders in the school and we will talk about that and what they can do to go out and send the positive message.

I also think that there has to be a hard line taken, a hard accountability line taken on the students and some parents in terms of their behaviour. What goes and what doesn't go. Not just because of class climate and school climate but because of the wider expectations of society. If we are not a model of the wider expectations of society, then we are leading our students and our parents astray. So we take a pretty hard line on some things, I think that is really important.

UP

Can you give me an example of something you have taken a hard line on?

Well, we have certain bottom line rules I guess you could call them for lack of anything else in the school. Fighting is a good example. Under no circumstances will we allow it to occur. There are always extenuating circumstances but our bottom line is fighting does not occur in this school, and if it does there are serious consequences.

With parents one of the consequences that I take a pretty hard line on with parents is supporting the school with homework. We have a number of processes in place. A homework class kids can go to so that they don't even have to bother their parents with homework at home. We have to have parental support with the students for that. So there are a couple of examples, there are certainly more but I think being caregivers we tend to kind of take on everybody's responsibility and let people abdicate what should be theirs.

UP

What has the response of the parents been to that particular strategy?

They are very positive because we deal with it positively. For example in one of our newsletters we said here are some things that we need parents to do in order to be successful and we listed them:
.know where your teenager is
.have some bedtime guidelines
very basic stuff. And the feedback was, especially from some of our best and most supportive parents was very positive. "Thank you for that". Now I know that I am doing my job as a parent. So, I think we have to be very clear with parents what their expectations are

from the school and they appreciate that.

UP

How do you as a principal communicate with the parents? How do you establish and maintain those links?

Nov 3

Well, first of all there is a formal PAC which most schools have. I think that it is really important to talk to parents a lot. We have parents in and out of the school and when they are in and out I am talking to them. I also believe that the best job I can do with parents is to hire the best possible teachers to teach their children and so I really put a lot of emphasis on that because I can do a wonderful PR job with a parent but if the job isn't happening in that classroom with that child and the messages going home are not good it doesn't matter all the work that I have done goes to naught. So, I work through the teachers and I help the teachers, I coach them on how to deal effectively with parents, I think that is very, very important.

UP

Do you make phone calls?

We have a number of different things. We have a positive referral system that goes with the classroom climate plan where if students are referred down to my office there are letters that go home to parents and so on. We also have a positive phone call system in the school whereby it is the expectation that every teachers makes thirty positive phone calls a month to parents. So that means one a day or two every second day however you choose to do it. We find that has a lot of paybacks for us and I do the same thing, I go down the list and do mine too.

UP

You talked very briefly at the beginning whereby students were involved in setting the discipline policy for the school. Does the school have a discipline policy?

Yes, we call it a Positive Behaviour Plan and it includes a Charter of Rights and Responsibilities.

That is where we started with students what are your rights in the school and what are your responsibilities. We brainstormed that with staff first to develop a framework and then we let students fill in the indicators. What does it look like when, you know so that they have a concrete feel for what that means. So we start with that and along with that goes what are the positive behaviours, what are the negative behaviours and then what are some of the consequences?

Another important aspect of that is again each classroom or key group sets up their own in the classroom based on a Charter of Rights and Responsibilities, they set up their own Code of Conduct and Expectations in the classroom within certain guidelines. We do that every year again so that every group of students has a chance to have input into that.

UP

So that is one means of giving students input into some of the things that affect them. Are there other strategies that you use to involve students in the decision making process?

Certainly, and I believe one of the things we want to do is approach a true democracy. So what I will do sometimes in the morning staff meetings is I will say to teachers take this back to your students and discuss it with them. Or when I am meeting with our leadership team I will say to the room representatives, take this back, discuss it, get some feedback, bring it back in. Anytime we are going to be massively changing anything, we take it to students. For example, when we were first putting our progress report out and doing our next draft we took it to students. What did you think of the first draft, what did you like, what didn't you like and then brought it back and used that information in the revision.

I think that any major problem that we have in the school we also deal with through the students in a sort of collective problem solving kind of way of doing it. It is amazing the solutions we come up with sometimes.

UP

What strategies do you use to involve staff in the decision making process?

Well, I believe that the most important strategy that we use right now are the journalling and the team time because what often tends to happen in a school is that there is a major staff meeting and a few vocal kind of people speak up and that is considered the input or non-input. What happens now with the lead teachers having team meetings with me every week is that I get a lot of information and input from staff second hand and that works well because sometimes people feel a lot better in a smaller peer group to say what is on their mind. I also give staff the opportunity for a lot of input into decisions and perhaps I err in that I give them too much opportunity because a lot of them don't take me up on it, they just say go ahead, make a decision on that one, I don't want anything to do with it. What I am finding is that people trust, a lot of times, my decision because they understand so clearly where I am coming from and they are philosophically along with me so they are willing to let me make a decision in their stead. I believe that philosophical alignment is very important, I think people want less input when they sense that the philosophy is aligned.

UP

Did your attitude survey results reflect that trust.

Almost to a scary degree. I don't think I will ever see results like that again. Yes, they did and I say scary because along with that goes a great responsibility. Again I believe it is because we're philosophically aligned, I believe that most of the staff know where we are headed, they trust what is going on in the school and in fact they are very much in support of it because they see it as being a positive change for the future.

UP

Your school is a fairly new school and is establishing itself or has established itself within the last few years in the community. What strategies have you used to work with the community at large, the community beyond that of the parent?

Well, I think the most important thing about that it to be aware that there is a community out there beyond. I think that is the first step. We have actively solicited involvement in our PAC people that don't have students in the school and indeed we have people sitting on our board right now that don't have students and will never have because they don't have children but they are very interested. They are local ratepayers of which a lot of their money goes to the school and they bring a unique perspective. I really also believe that we reach out to the community through the curriculum. That has been our emphasis in terms of community involvement. We have everything from "Project Business" going all through the school to a work study experience program where we have students out in local businesses all around the community. We also co-ordinate community meetings in the school and there is one just coming up in November where we are going to look at how can we help our youth in the community. These are open to all people, all stakeholders who have anything to do with youth in the community and we get a lot of people coming to those who don't have children and that are just concerned and want to work as a community and do better things for students.

Then of course there are the things that most schools do. Inviting in guest speakers and that kind of thing from outside.

UP

With the community leaders - how often do you do this?

We are just starting this year. The first one is going to be on youth, well, we have stayed away from the term violence because I don't think we really have a violence problem in the community. But there is the potential to have that and we need to develop a safety net so I would say we are going to have two or three a year on a variety of different topics.

What we did was take the Education Committee concept and try to bring it down to the community level. Issues of importance in education and have an issues kind of evening.

UP

What strategies do you use to work with your staff in terms of their professional development?

Well, first and foremost I think professional development can happen in a lot of different ways. I think that staff have very narrow view of professional development as going to an inservice. I think we have really focused on in-house professional development. How can we use the resources that we have in the school because we have fantastic teachers in this school to help each other grow and learn. And then with that focus then each teacher creates a plan for themselves for the year. Where do I want to go with my goals, my personal and professional goals for the year and they hook their Pd directly to that and because the goals are also hooked to the priorities for the school there is a direct link as to what their PD does and the priorities for the school. If their PD is outside of their goal areas, quite often it isn't approved. I make that very clear to staff that professional development has to be within your goals which are within the school philosophy, beliefs and priorities.

UP

So are you the person who approves the professional development in terms of attendance at conferences

I have been and I am working not to be. I have delegated some of that to the team leaders. What we have done is take a certain chunk of our professional development monies and delegated it to the teams for joint professional development for that team and so they are making some joint choices about how they are going to use and allocate those resources. I really believe that I need to begin to let go of that a little bit and delegate that to the people who are in the decision making and know what is best in terms of their own professional development.

I find the team leaders ask harder questions than I ever would in terms of where does this fit, how does this help students. Is it going to help achievement and those hard questions get asked at the team meetings.

UP

In our discussion so far we have focused on teaching staff. How do the support staff tie into the team concept and how do you ensure that they have the same ability to feel empowered?

Well, this is an area where I need to grow a little bit. I feel that I tend especially with secretarial, with my secretaries to treat them like my left and right hands at times and one thing I have done that I think has worked well is to develop a team within a team as well. They have a team leader both the custodial staff and the support staff group have a team leader. We meet on a regular basis to discuss what is happening with the team and then they take information back to their team and discuss it with them. So, they have the same kind of network happening as teachers have. There is a difference between support staff and teaching staff certainly and I think one of the keys is motivation. There are certainly a lot of motivational things that need to occur and I am still working at how can I continue to help those people to grow and be motivated in the jobs that they do, especially when some of them are very repetitive day after day after day.

UP

What incentives are provided for teachers and students in the school.

I really believe in using leadership as an incentive. I believe that most teachers and students have leadership capabilities and so in our school, I will deal with teaching staff first, we have the leadership structure and I know that there are teachers that aspire to being part of that leadership structure and so we use that as a little bit of a motivator. They get more of my attention because my job as the school gets bigger is to train leaders not to train teachers but to train leaders that then train teachers. I believe it gives them more opportunities for growth. I really honestly believe that what people are looking for in the workplace are opportunities for growth and an opportunity to feel a part of something very special and so those are the two things we try to provide for teachers.

We provide a lot of positive feedback and I think everybody needs that. I think teaching is a very lonely in that regard so, we put an emphasis on providing positive feedback.

We do exactly the same thing with students. We put emphasis on providing positive feedback. We provide opportunities for leadership and extra kinds of things that you can do to demonstrate your strengths and talents and that also hooks kids into ownership, far more ownership with the school than they would have. Now of course we have all the nitty gritty incentives to. We have [name of school] "bucks" that I give out for positive referrals and some of those things but I really don't think that they drive the school. I think that leadership drives the school more than anything.

UP

You've got a fairly large school. How many students do you have?

We have 430 this year, we will go to 600 next year.

UP

How do you get to know, what strategies do you use to get to know your kids?

Of course you know management by walking around is one of the best. What always concerns me is that I get to know my rising stars and I get to know the ones that are having some difficulty but what concerns me is the middle eighty per cent and those are the students I work really hard to get to know. We do that through the positive referral system but I also do it by going into classrooms and taking over the teaching, getting to know the students, working with groups of students. I believe that I need to be actively involved in doing some extra-curricular activities and coaching and those kinds of things. I am always in the hallway at the end of a school day. I greet every student in the morning and say goodnight to every student at the front door and gradually I get to attach names to faces and I learn who they are and what they can do.

UP

That must be a, I won't say difficult, challenging task.

It is and especially again with the middle group. I think that middle, that silent majority is the most important group in a school, it is the "swing" group, it can go one of two ways and I think we often end up spending a lot of time on the twenty per cent instead of that eighty per cent.

UP

Is there any else that you want to share with me about your role in the school that I may not have touched on.

Well, you asked at the outset what makes an effective leader and I really believe that a lot of it has to do with modelling. My modelling from other people that I have had contact with. I have had some absolutely outstanding bosses to use a term or people that I have worked with and I think that has made a big difference for me. I have been able to model a lot of strategies. I have been able to see effective leaders in action, see what they do, and see why what they do works so well. I have taken a lot of what they do and put it into my own repertoire. To me that has been the most illuminating thing for me in terms of what is good leadership. I don't believe that I would be as effective as I am if I hadn't had those models and continue to have those models. I think that is important.